

What makes transitioning from Nurture Groups to mainstream education successful or unsuccessful? The views of the children, parents and school staff.

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Abstract

There is currently very little research that focusses on the transition of children from Nurture Groups into mainstream education, with the focus of research on measures of effectiveness post intervention. There is also little guidance in relation to policy and procedures that aid this process. The systematic literature search identified a distinct lack of child and parental participation within the research, with a focus on teachers' experience. The aim of this research was to gain the views of those who directly experienced transition on the strategies used, the factors important to the children and the experiences of parents supporting their child during this transition.

A critical realism position was adopted and a qualitative design employed to explore the transition experience of Nurture Group children, parents and staff (both Nurture Group and mainstream) during the transition from nursery to reception year.

A child centred methodology using the technique of photo-elicitation was used to allow children to capture the important places, people and objects in their mainstream school. Semi-structured interviews were used to ask why they had taken those particular pictures. This provided insight into what was important to children to have in a mainstream classroom following transition from a Nurture Group. Eight children, aged 4-5 and from two different schools within the same Local Authority took part in the research.

Parents and teachers of the eight children involved were surveyed and invited to attend a focus group to explore their experiences

An inductive thematic analysis revealed six themes that confirmed previous research into the factors important in creating a safe base from which children can explore and learn. Results identified a gap in communication from the receiving school following transition. Overall, transition strategies took a whole school approach through specific school policy and procedures, such as

differentiated playtimes for all children that need it, as opposed to being specifically for Nurture Group children.

Further research into the area of transition of Nurture Group children and their long-term life outcomes are indicated in the discussion.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 What is a Nurture Group?

'Nurture Groups (NG) are described by the NG Network as:

“in school, teacher-led psychosocial intervention of groups of less than 12 students that effectively replace missing or distorted early nurturing experiences for both children and young adults...” (NG Network, 2016; NGs pg. 2)

The first NG was developed by Marjorie Boxall in response to the growing need for social and emotional intervention for children in Hackney in 1969 who had missed out on opportunities to develop in these areas within their natural development/environment. NG's are based on 6 core principles outlined by Lucas, Insley & Buckland (2006) as:

1. Children's learning is understood developmentally.
2. The classroom offers a safe base.
3. Nurture is important for the development of self-esteem.
4. Language is vital form of communication.
5. The importance of transition in children's lives is understood.
6. All behaviour is a form of communication.

Boxall (2002) identified two primary aims of NG's as providing children with an environment that promotes Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) development and removing the barriers to this development. The outcome of this intervention was to ensure children were prepared for the demands of a mainstream classroom. Early childhood conduct disorders have been found to be a significant predictor of all adult disorders (Kim-Cohen et al, 2003), demonstrating the importance of early intervention for future mental health.

1.2 Types of Nurture Groups

There are 3 main variants of NG's currently being used within schools across the UK and these vary in how they implement the 6 core principles. The 'classic model' (Variant 1; Boxall & Lucas, 2010) of NGs include 10-12 children, one qualified teacher and one teaching assistant (TA) with specific training in nurture. Children would generally be expected to spend half of their school day within their

mainstream classroom and the other half in the NG. Routine and a predictable environment are key structures within a classic model that allow children to build reciprocal, trusting and supportive relationships with key adults that allows them to develop their own self-worth (Cooper & Lovey, 1999).

Variant 2 adheres to the core principles of a NG but differs in its attendance and structure of the day (Cooper et al, 2001). Variant 3 differs from the others only in the organisational structure of focus, for example a purely emotional emphasis and no academia (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007). Within NG practice considerable differences have been observed (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

1.3 The National Context

The 'Every Child Matters' agenda (Department for Education and Skills, DfES, 2004) outlined the duty on schools to increase the emotional wellbeing of their pupils and this has led to numerous government initiatives such as the 'Targeted Mental Health Project in Schools (TaMHS, Department for Children, Schools & Families, 2008) as targeted intervention and the Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning Programme (SEAL, Department for Education, 2005) as a universal approach. Further research has demonstrated that children who experience emotional difficulties are more likely to struggle in school activities and relationships (National Institute for Clinical Excellence 2008 & 2009).

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2014 (SEN CoP, 2014) recognises the importance of emotional wellbeing and defines this Special Educational Need (SEN) as 'social, emotional and mental health' needs (SEMH). Children who display SEMH needs are described as:

“...becoming withdrawn/isolated, as well as displaying challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour.” (SEN CoP, 2014; pg. 98).

This description of SEMH needs may generally be used as a form of initial identification for children who may require intervention, which could be in the form of a NG. Children displaying SEMH needs as a primary need make up 29.7% of the total 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN) population who are receiving support from either SEN support (17.3%) or an Educational, Health & Care Plan (12.4%)

and therefore has become a priority need for the government (Department for Education, 2017).

NG's have been recognised by the government as a means of providing intervention for children with SEMH needs and they have been included in many reports and policy papers. For example, the Healthy Schools Toolkit (2012), the Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools Report (2014) and Ofsted's Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviour (2011) which reports:

"The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding in NGs...many pupils who have found school challenging are attending regularly and enjoying what school has to offer" (Ofsted, 2011).

Therefore, the use of NG's as a means of meeting the SEMH needs of our children is nationally relevant.

1.4 The Local Context

In line with legislation, the Local Authority where the research was carried out have ring-fenced an amount of money for the set-up of NG provision. This funding can be applied for by schools for the setting up and running of NG provision within their school to meet the needs of the children in their area. Training is also offered to all school staff within the local area on attachment theory, NG's and how to overcome these barriers with children displaying SEMH needs.

Given the investment in NG provision by Local Authority, the findings were likely to prove useful in relation to the usefulness of current funding and targeting future investment. This research provides valuable insight into what practices are currently being undertaken to re-integrate children from NG provision into mainstream classrooms and with what success. Information was gathered from those invested in the process; the children who attended the NG, the staff who ran the NG, the mainstream school staff and the parents.

1.5 Conceptual and Theoretical Background

NG's are rooted in Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory which identifies the relationship between a child and their care giver as of paramount importance in order for social and emotional development to occur. This early bond/relationship

with the primary care giver determines how we interpret future social situations through the development of 'Internal Working Models' that identify rules for certain social situations. This is a 'reciprocal cycle' that re-enforces interpretations and appropriate/inappropriate behaviour through consistency/inconsistency of response in our social activities (Bowlby, 1973; Wallin, 2007). Three types of attachment were identified in children whose parents were asked to leave them in a 'Strange Situation' (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978) with a forth being added following further research (Main & Solomon, 1986):

1. Secure- the child accepts periods of separation from the caregiver confident they will return.
2. Avoidant- anxious/distressed reaction when left and avoidant of the caregiver upon their return.
3. Ambivalent- anxious/distressed state when left and no comfort felt upon their return.
4. Disorganised- heightened emotional response when left.

In a nurturing environment, the care giver will respond to the child in a warm and consistent manner that feels supportive to the child (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978). This in turn allows the child to create an internal working model that is secure and results in the child being more open to adult assistance (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This is represented as 'secure attachment' in Ainsworth's attachment styles (Ainsworth et al, 1978). Children who are securely attached develop socially abilities that enable them to co-operate, self-regulate their emotions and initiate social situations (Sroufe, 1988; Sroufe, Fox & Pancake, 1983; van Ijzendoorn, 1995). Marjorie Boxall (2002) hypothesised that Internal Working Models impact on our ability to initiate and maintain positive relationships, develop perseverance, attention, co-operation and curiosity which all provide a strong basis for learning (Boxall, 2002). NG's aim to enable children to (re) experience attuned, nurturing care through intensive interactions within a predictable and safe environment (Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014).

Children who do not receive a nurturing environment and experience inconsistent responses to the same behaviour cannot create the stable cause and effect required to develop a secure internal working model and therefore adopt a defective attachment style (Avoidant, Ambivalent or Disorganised). The type of internal working model a child develops for social interactions has an effect on readiness and ability to learn, impacting on their ability to maintain positive relationships, develop perseverance, maintaining attention, co-operation and curiosity (Boxall, 2002). Therefore, secure nurturing environments are linked to the future cognitive development (DiBartolo & Vinacke, 1969) and the mental health of children right through to adulthood (Mental Health Foundation, 2014). Fabes, Leonard, Kupanoff & Martin (2001) identified 3 ways a non-nurturing environment may affect future relationships:

1. Limited ability to learn important early social skills.
2. Aggressive behaviour that triggers reciprocal behaviour, discipline or rejection.
3. Early termination of social relationships.

It is proposed that NG's enable children with insecure attachments to become more secure in their relationships through experiencing attuned, nurturing care and intensive interactions within a predictable and safe environment (Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014). The problems associated with the lack of intellectually and socially stimulating experiences can be overcome with the right intervention (Rutter, 1981) and has been demonstrated by Hodges & Tizard's (1989) study of 'privation' (failure to form an attachment). They found that children in care who had no opportunity to develop attachments until adoption at age 4 had comparable attachment styles to the control group from 'typical families' and had better emotional functioning than children who remained in care or went back to their families. Therefore, they argued that the SEMH difficulties associated with insecure attachments can be overcome through appropriate intervention.

For the purposes of this research the following terms are defined as follows:

- Transition- the process of moving from one educational setting to the next, specifically from nursery to reception years.

- Re-integration- the process of re-joining your original class on a full-time basis following a period of time on part time timetable that included Nurture Group provision.
- School starters- children joining school at school age in the reception year.

1.6 Researcher's Position

The researcher's previous work within the youth and adult justice system has led to a desire to uncover the effects of risk and protective factors on a child. The future outcomes for these children and what can be done to support healthy adult functioning, for children who have a disadvantaged start in life. Previous literature has demonstrated that 50% of adults classified as experiencing mental health difficulties had experienced these difficulties as a child, with appropriate support being provided for less than half of those (Young Minds, 2002).

The researcher believes that early intervention and a strength's based approach is an effective means of allowing children to flourish in an environment that would dictate otherwise, with all children having the ability to contribute positively to society. The researcher believes that many of the individuals she worked with within the justice system displayed attachment difficulties and had a history of parental abuse and/ neglect, which had contributed to their negative future life outcomes. Therefore, preventative measures such as NG's could prove imperative in reducing the impact of attachment difficulties on future life outcomes.

1.7 Research Rationale

With SEMH being recognised as a national and locally relevant need (see 1.3 & 1.4) for the long-term life outcomes of children and young people, schools have been tasked with improving the mental health of children as part of universal and targeted intervention. Successive governments have introduced different approaches and this has resulted in different practices being employed nationwide (TaMHS, SEAL, Healthy Schools Toolkit; see 1.3). Nurture Groups are one intervention that can be found across schools in the UK a variety of different settings (nursery, primary and secondary schools), with the NG Network

(NGN) quoting over 1500 registered NG's in 2014 (Nurture Group Network, 2014). This does not consider NG's not registered with NGN or those who have not received training directly from the NGN and therefore is likely to be an underestimate.

NG's aim to develop SEMH using social interactions that are naturally apparent but not realised in children and therefore does not add, but replaces nurturing relationships and experiences. The researcher is interested in the long-term effects of NG's and the process transitioning children into mainstream education on a full-time basis. Without successful transition practices that allow children to feel confident in the mainstream learning environment, children may continue to experience long term difficulties.

This research aims to contribute to this gap in the research literature with a specific focus on how children are transitioning into mainstream classrooms and the lived experience of this from the viewpoint of the children, parents and staff.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter outlines the relevant literature in relation to children's, parents and staff member's experiences of re-integrating children from NGs into mainstream classrooms. A systematic review of the available literature indicates that research has been carried out in three main areas of NG provision (listed in order of prevalence); the effectiveness of NGs on social and emotional development; the effect of NGs on academic achievement; and children's, parents and staff perceptions of their experience of NGs.

Research outlining current practices of re-integrating NG children into mainstream classrooms could not be identified, nor could research focussing specifically on the experience of transition. The studies included will be structured by focus of the research as follows:

1. The effectiveness of NGs.
2. Parental involvement within NGs.
3. Children's experiences of NGs.
4. Perceptions of children, school staff and parents of NGs.

The discussion of studies focussed on the effectiveness of NGs aims to explore the effectiveness of current re-integration practices. The researcher assumes that long term effectiveness of NGs indicates effective re-integration practices. The review of studies that include parental, staff and children's views of Nurture provision are important as these key stake holders hold information about the experience of re-integration following intervention. It is acknowledged that although this is not the primary focus of these studies, re-integration is ultimately a part of the NG process.

To date there has been little research outlining the practices being used in UK mainstream schools to re-integrate NG children into mainstream classrooms on a full-time basis. The 2006 Good Practice (OFSTED, 2006) publication identified re-integration as a weakness in schools, reporting that teachers' do not build on the work completed by alternative provision to support children. The weaknesses

highlighted by OFSTED (2006) are reflected in the lack of research and advice/guidance available on the re-integration of children.

The purpose of this critical analysis is to examine each piece of literature in relation to the quality of its methodology, individual findings and how these relate to the NG evidence. They will also be discussed in relation to their implications in relation to re-integration. A summary of all ten studies included in this review can be found in Appendix 1 (includes methodology, design, sampling, measures, analysis and findings).

2.2. Systematic Literature Search

A systematic literature search was conducted in August 2017 to provide a comprehensive review of the available relevant research. This included a critical and systematic analysis of the research area and methodology. This was used to inform the current research methodology and focus.

2.2.1 Database Search

The database search engine EBSCOHOST was used to complete a systematic key word search using the databases Education Research Complete, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES and ERIC. With NGs being the specific intervention of interest, the term 'NG*' (all terms search) was initially used to identify all research in this area. The asterisks after keywords represent searches that include any words with the same letters. For example, searching for 'group*' would include any articles with the key words 'group' as well as 'groups'. This initial search identified 232 articles of interest, however after applying the advanced search criteria of 'Full text article', 'Peer review' and an age range of 0-12; the articles reduced from 232 to eleven (full text: n=137, peer reviewed: n=122, age 0-12: n=11; respectively). These articles dated from 1992 to 2014 indicating a lack of recent publication in this area. Given the limited number of articles retrieved from this search, a number of searches were completed using various keywords to ensure all relevant data was identified (details of which can be found in Table 1).

The abstracts of each article were read in line with the following inclusion criteria to determine applicability to the specific subject area of interest:

- Children had received a 'classic' variant of NG intervention.
- Parents, staff or children's views on the impact of the intervention were reported.
- Parents, staff or children's views reported on the subsequent return to mainstream education.
- The NGs that children attended were based within the UK.
- Children who had attended NGs where of Early Years or Primary age.

Table 2.1- Details of Database Search

<i>Search 1</i>	
Search Date	27/07/2017
Databases Searched	EBSCO, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete, ERIC
Key Words Used	'NG'*
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; English; Age Range (0-12).
Results	11
Number deemed relevant following application of Inclusion criteria to abstract	7
<i>Search 2</i>	
Search Date	04/08/2017
Databases Searched	EBSCO, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete, ERIC
Key Words Used	'NG'*
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; English.
Results	46

Number deemed relevant following application of Inclusion criteria to abstract	4
<i>Search 3</i>	
Search Date	04/08/2017
Databases Searched	EBSCO, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete, ERIC
Key Words Used	'school readiness'*
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; English; Age Range (2-5).
Results	336
Number deemed relevant following application of Inclusion criteria to abstract	0
<i>Search 4</i>	
Search Date	04/08/2017
Databases Searched	EBSCO, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete, ERIC
Key Words Used	'NG AND reintegration'*
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; English.
Results	66
Number deemed relevant following application of Inclusion criteria to abstract	3
<i>Search 5</i>	
Search Date	04/08/2017
Databases Searched	EBSCO, PsychArticles, PsychINFO,

	Educational Research Complete, ERIC
Key Words Used	'school readiness AND emotional'*
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; English; Age Range (0-12).
Results	74
Number deemed relevant following application of Inclusion criteria to abstract	0
<i>Search 6</i>	
Search Date	04/08/2017
Databases Searched	EBSCO, PsychArticles, PsychINFO, Educational Research Complete, ERIC
Key Words Used	'NGs AND mainstream'*
Advanced Search Inclusion Criteria	Full Text; Peer Reviewed Journals; References Available; English; Age Range (0-12).
Results	2
Number deemed relevant following application of Inclusion criteria to abstract	1

The searches outlined above retrieved a total number of fifteen research articles which were then read in full, again applying the inclusion criteria to determine applicability. From this a total number of nine research articles were identified and details of these are outlined below. Articles were removed due to duplication (within a systematic literature review, N=2), a focus on the attainment of older children (N=1), not being UK based (N=1) and being descriptive as opposed to applied research based (N=2). A hand search using the search engines 'Google' and 'Google Scholar' identified one further peer reviewed article which has also been

included.

Table 2.2- Studies Included in Literature Review (N=10)

Kirkbride, R. (2014). 'They were a little family': an exploratory study of parental involvement in NGs- from a practitioner and parent perspective. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 41 (1), 82-104.
Griffiths, R., Stenner, R. & Hicks, U. (2014). Hearing the unheard: Children's constructions of their NG experiences. <i>Educational & Child Psychology</i> , 31 (1), 124-136.
Syrnyk, C. (2014). Capturing the Nurture approach: experiences of young pupils with SEBD. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 19 (2), 154-175.
Hughes, N. K. & Schlösser. (2014). The effectiveness of NGs: a systematic review. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 19 (4), 386-409.
Shaver, I. & McClatchey, K. (2013). Assessing effectiveness of NGs in Northern Scotland. <i>British Journal of Learning Support</i> , 28 (3), 97-102.
Garner, J. & Thomas, M. (2011). The role and contribution of NGs in secondary schools: perceptions of children, parents and staff. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 16 (2), 207-224.
Taylor, V. M. & Gulliford, A. (2011). Parental perspectives on NGs: the potential for engagement. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 38 (2), 73-82.
Cooper, P. & Tiknaz, Y. (2005). Progress and challenge in NGs: evidence from three case studies. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 32 (4), 211-222.
Doyle, R. (2001). Using a readiness scale for reintegrating pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from a NG into their mainstream classroom — a pilot study. <i>British Journal of Special Education</i> , 28 (3), 126-132.
Iszatt, J. & Wasilewska, T. (1997). 'NGs: an early intervention model enabling vulnerable children with emotional and behavioural difficulties to integrate successfully into school'. <i>Educational & Child Psychology</i> , 14 (3), 121-139.

Garner & Thomas's (2011) study is focussed secondary school Nurture Groups as opposed to the Early Years or Primary age cited in the current research's inclusion criteria. This study has been included due to similarities in the methodology employed and to provide initial critique and knowledge of the

strengths and difficulties of this methodology. Appendix 1 includes a summary of each study in relation to specific methodology and findings.

2.3. Critical Analysis of the Literature

2.3.1 The Effectiveness of NGs on Children's Social and Emotional Development.

This section provides an outline of the current evidence base for the use of NGs as an intervention to improve the SEMH of children with needs in this area. A critical review of the evidence base will examine quantitative studies using Hughes & Schlösser's (2014) systematic review, a mixed methods study conducted by Shaver & McClatchey (2013) and a qualitative study conducted by Cooper & Tiknaz (2005). The varied methodologies highlight the differing designs used to answer similar research questions and the quality/value of those findings.

The Effectiveness of NGs: Quantitative Studies

Hughes & Schlösser (2014) conducted a systematic review of studies that focus on effectiveness of NGs (improvements in the emotional well-being of children with SEMH difficulties) and aimed to identify the effective strategies used. This review included only quantitative measures of effectiveness or observational studies that identified effective strategies. 11 papers with a focus on effectiveness were reviewed using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, including both 'classic' (four studies) and 'adapted' (seven studies) variations of NGs. In addition to these 11, two additional studies focussing on communication and praise as effective strategies were included. Quality assessments of each individual study were completed using the Downs & Black checklist (1998) which was adapted to fit the data collected. Overall, Hughes & Schlösser (2014) concluded that there is evidence that NGs are effective in improving the emotional well-being of children. In relation to effective strategies used within NGs; an increased use of positive verbal and non-verbal behaviour by NG staff was found to facilitate the development of attachments.

Hughes & Schlösser (2014) were not able to complete a meta-analysis of the selected studies due to heterogeneity in the methodologies and therefore studies were reviewed qualitatively. Hughes & Schlösser (2014) concluded that research needs to be of a higher quality and include longitudinal research. The overall quality of the effectiveness studies ranged from 10.5% and 73.7% (measured using the Downs & Black checklist, 1998) which indicates poor to reasonable quality. This highlights a significant difference in the robustness of methodologies and data analysis employed by researchers, when measuring NG effectiveness. Ten of the studies relied on teacher reports using the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire- *t* [SDP (*t*); Goodman, 1997] and Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998), which may lead to bias in overall results due to the teacher's awareness of the child's attendance in NG. Triangulation of data was attempted in three studies through parent questionnaires (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001), parent interviews (Sanders, 2007) and pupil interviews (Cooper et al, 2001; Sanders, 2007). However, without the use of standardised measures these do not provide the quantitative information required for their review.

The quality of four out of the 11 studies was compromised by the lack of a control group which affects the internal validity of the findings. That is, was it the intervention that caused the change or something else? Of the seven studies that recruited control groups, six made attempts to match their sample on varying traits. The sampling methods used in the composition of a control group may have affected the results of some studies, dependant on what variables were being controlled for. For example, Seth-Smith et al (2010) found that both the control group and NG children improved significantly on some strands of the Boxall Profile and not sub-strand 'undeveloped behaviour', which is a novel finding compared to the other studies. The omission of controlling for 'level of need' may have affected these results with others reporting significant improvements on all five strands when controlling for this variable (Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney, 2009).

Studies also varied in the time post- measures were taken by a significant degree with some taken three months following the pre- (one school term), and another after one year (three school terms). Previous evidence suggests that for a NG to be effective it must be in place for a minimum of two terms and for a maximum of

four (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). Therefore, studies that collected data prior to two terms may have findings that are less reliable than those collected later in the intervention.

Follow up data was provided for one study only (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002), taken at a mean of 2.67 years' post intervention with no intention to follow the children any further. They reported 16/20 strands of the Boxall Profile sustained the improvements made during the NG intervention. Although, relapse was seen in sub-strands 'connects up experiences', 'undeveloped/insecure sense of self', 'shows negativity towards other' and 'wants/grabs, disregarding of others'. This is an important finding for the process of re-integration in relation to identifying what aspects of the mainstream classroom lead to these relapses and what practice overcomes it? The research literature is yet to answer these questions.

The lack of follow-up data has significant effects on the paucity of research around re-integration, as studies end as children exit the NG. In addition, there is limited guidance available on re-integration, compared to running the groups (see www.nurturegroups.org booklet). However, within NG evaluations there is little consideration given to how children are re-integrated into a mainstream classroom, full time. The omission of a model of reintegration leads to varied practice, reliant on a school's experience and investment into children with SEMH difficulties.

The present study is interested in 'classic' models of NGs only, therefore the four studies reviewed by Hughes & Schlösser (2014) that included this variant of NG (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Doyle, 2005; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; and Seth-Smith et al, 2010) will be critically analysed. The quality of the studies including 'classic' NGs only was noticeably better than those that included variants with ratings of 54.5%-68.4% (indicates reasonable quality) on the Downs & Black checklist (1998).

The three 'classic' NG studies used the Boxall Profile as outcome measures and all reported significant gains for NG children. Although, only one study (Seth-Smith, et al, 2010) administered this to both NG and control group children resulting in

higher validity and reliability ratings than the other two studies (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002).

A significant flaw in these studies was the high attrition rate of participants with a significant number of children being 'lost' between pre- and post- measures. Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001) lost 61/216 (28%) NG children between pre- and post; and O'Connor & Colwell (2002) reporting findings at the follow up stage of only 12/68 (18%) NG children. The resulting small sample size of the latter study has significant implications for the reliability and validity of its findings. It is not clear why attrition rates are so high in these studies.

As a case study, Doyle's (2005) research has the generalisability difficulties (lack of external validity) associated with a small sample size as well as not being suitable for statistical analysis. Therefore, its inclusion in this systematic review could be questioned. In addition, although Hughes & Schlösser (2014) identify Cooper, Arnold & Boyd's (2001) study as a 'classic' NG evaluation, closer investigation revealed it includes different variants in their results (see Appendix 1), however the 'variant' of NG showed no significant difference on outcome measure scores.

Hughes & Schlösser's (2014) primary aim was to systematically review quantitative aspects of studies only, it may have been useful to include qualitative information within this. This is particularly relevant to their second research question:

- *What NG strategies appear to be effective?*

Although an attempt to answer this question using observational studies identified two studies (Bani, 2011 and Colwell & O'Connor, 2003), their focus was specific to styles of communication and language used in NGs. Therefore, the strategies identified by Hughes & Schlösser's (2014) are limited to communication style as opposed to 'effective strategies used' and qualitative data may have been more useful in answering this question.

Studies of Effectiveness that include Qualitative Methods

Shaver & McClatchey (2013) used a mixed-methods design using qualitative information in the interpretation of quantitative measures, in this case the Boxall Profile. The strength of this study is its use of key parties (NG children and staff) to explore the effects (successes and challenges) of NGs on children, parents, teachers' and school. Shaver & McClatchey's (2013) design included the following:

- Focus groups with NG children followed by a short questionnaire (N=19).
- Semi-structured interviews with NG staff (N=5).
- Boxall profile pre- and post- NG intervention (N=33).

NG children were reported to have significantly improved on 15/20 sub-strands of the Boxall Profile indicating a positive effect of the intervention.

Three focus groups, made up of children from three separate NGs included an ice breaker related to the topic which was beneficial in relation to building rapport, settling anxieties and gaining topic focus. Other than the ice breaker activity and three pre-determined questions; there is no further information about the procedure and approach taken to facilitating the focus group. Information about the relationship (or lack of one) between the researchers and the participants is also omitted. This information is important in understanding power relations, i.e. the participants aiming to please the researchers as people in authority.

The overall findings from the focus group and questionnaire was that children enjoyed attending NGs and were happy. They could express why a child may go to a NG and had made some friends. However, no findings are presented for one of the three pre-determined questions (What are the best things about the NG?) and both the focus group questions and the questionnaire could create bias in the results. The focus group questions asked about the practicalities of attending a NG and the 'best things' about it (although findings not reported); and questionnaire items asked about happiness, enjoyment and looking forward to coming to the group, all framed in a positively biased framework. Only one closed question that asked about any negative aspects of the NG and was identified as an open

question by the authors. Changing this question to a truly open question may have yielded richer data than the majority response of 'nothing' (11/19).

A collated summary of responses is presented for NG staffs semi-structured interviews and indicates benefits to children's confidence, ability to form attachments and improved academic progress. NG staff also reported parent's initial negativity towards the NG (possibly due to fear of judgement) and feelings of support from the NG staff as time progresses. Although the authors attempt here to identify the effects of NGs on parents, this is from a teacher's perspective. The research would have benefitted from including parent's views to either validate the teacher's responses or give their personal view.

Overall, Shaver & McClatchey (2013) have placed importance on the views of NG teacher's and children who are the main stakeholders in the intervention. This could have provided crucial information into 'how' NGs effect children's SEMH to complement quantitative measures of effectiveness. However, a lack of information on sampling (no demographics reported) of participants, procedures and no use of a formal data analysis for qualitative data are significant methodological flaws that limit the trustworthiness of the findings.

Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) applied a qualitative methodology to report the effects of NGs on social, emotional, behavioural and educational development in relation to perceived progress, challenges and difficulties in running a NG and factors that are effective in running a NG. The design included conducting semi-structured interviews with NG teachers', NG teaching assistants, mainstream teachers' and head teachers on numerous occasions. Participants were sampled from three NGs across three schools and findings are described by the authors in the context of three case studies.

Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) report a total of nine participants who are employed as either a NG teacher or teaching assistant, however only the views of three NG Teachers' are included in the findings. This omission is not explained. NG teachers identified a comprehensive number of factors that contribute to success and had an awareness of the challenges they face. A key factor to success expressed by

NG teachers' was that of a balanced group composition that included less than two children with a priority need of challenging behaviour. Staff felt that disputes within the NG prevented opportunities for socialisation in more withdrawn children as they attempt to avoid the conflict. This is in line with Shaver & McClatchey's (2013) findings of NGs providing opportunities for socialisation and the development of friendships.

An interesting finding is that five out of the six factors for success were internal in terms of what NG staff do; and all challenges were resulting from external factors such as 'parent's attitudes towards school'. This may indicate a lack of critical reflection of practice and isolation from the wider school population. The possible isolation of NGs within a school is mirrored within mainstream teacher's interviews, reporting frustration with a lack of communication between NG and mainstream staff. Mainstream staff were not aware of what academic or SEMH work the NG children were completing and there appeared to be an overall confusion over responsibility for the child's academic progress. Although mainstream teachers' recognised improvements in SEMH needs there were little or no gains reported in academic progress and this was a major concern.

Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) although not aiming to, identified some important aspects for children in the re-integration to full time mainstream classes. Children reported they found re-joining their mainstream class difficult due to a lack of instruction, longer time waiting in class and more difficult work in comparison to the NG. Mainstream teachers also reported they felt NG children had become detached from their mainstream class and this made it difficult for them to find their 'place' upon return.

A strength of this methodology is the details provided for each specific NG (variant, intake, size, needs, start date) and the contextual information provided about the local area demographics and school performance. The inclusion of mainstream staff and head teacher's views also adds weight to the findings and highlights some of the problems, such as communication and responsibilities, during re-integration. This is particularly the case as NG staff were not aware that this was an issue.

Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) do omit information from their findings and there is no indication as to the reasons for this. As well as the NG teaching assistant's data being missing, one of the mainstream teacher's data was omitted with the remaining eight employed at only two of the three included schools. This indicates a skewed spread of participants across the three included. Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) also identify in their methodology the collection of 40 hours of non-participant unstructured observation that is not referred to. This study is an interim report as part of a long term mixed methods study which may account for the missing data, however this is not addressed.

Summary of Studies of Effectiveness

Studies of effectiveness in relation to NGs are the most prevalent type of study in this area. This is to be expected within intervention research as a means of building an evidence base that is reputable and this research has demonstrated an overall effectiveness in relation to the social and emotional development. The quality of studies overall is an issue to be addressed, as is the limited longitudinal data showing lasting effects. In addition, although the theoretical basis for practice is well established through attachment theory, specific strategies/teaching methods and underlying processes that enable a nurturing environment are not.

2.3.2 Parental Involvement in NG's

The involvement of parents in educational provision is essential for maintaining the skills gained from an intervention and therefore minimising risk in future outcomes (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). Within NG interventions this ensures a consistent approach, using empathy and understanding, transparent communication and clarity (Bishop, 2008; Ofsted, 2011). Despite this, parental involvement in NGs has been highlighted as an area that requires further investigation (Sanders, 2007; Bishop, 2008).

Taylor & Gulliford (2011) present an exploratory study into parental perspectives on NGs and aimed to identify potential for the future engagement of parents. Twenty-six participants (15 parents, 3 NG teachers' and 8 NG teaching

assistants) from an opportunity sample took part in semi-structured interviews. Participants were sourced from nine schools, across two Local Education Authorities and 14 NGs.

Findings indicated that the formality of meetings was important for parents, with parents more likely to engage in informal events such as 'celebrations' than structured meetings. This is particularly important for the processes used in informing and gaining parental consent for a child's inclusion into a NG. Taylor & Gulliford (2011) describe the initial planning meeting as a formal occasion attended by higher ranking staff (class teacher and SENCo/headteacher), which may inhibit parental engagement from the onset. This finding is important within the current study when considering the formality of staff/parent communication within the participating schools. Taylor & Gulliford (2011) also discuss how staff were not prepared for a high level of parental engagement, e.g. an open-door policy being withdrawn when it was deemed to be 'over-used'. This was replaced with an appointment system which resulted in minimal uptake, possibly due to formality and was eventually withdrawn. The response of the staff here suggests an attempt to lessen demand/accountability on them from parents, although this is not discussed.

Another important finding is the potential effect NG variant can have on parental engagement. The studies that took part are classed as 'variant' NGs (see Introduction Chapter), which limited the opportunities for contact with parents as their paths would not naturally cross. Within the school hierarchy teaching assistants possess less authority than other teaching staff and this is evidenced in their absence at initial meetings. It is also possible that teaching assistants may not feel confident in engaging effectively with parents.

Overall, Taylor & Gulliford (2011) reported that staff and parents felt the NG intervention was successful regardless of the level of parental involvement and this leads to two questions:

1. Would the intervention have been more successful with parental involvement?

2. Is parental engagement as essential as previously thought for success?

Although these questions are not discussed by the authors they highlight some methodological flaws in this study. Firstly, the timing of the interviews with parents and staff are not specified which may have affected overall findings due to the current context of the child within the school. For example, if interviews were completed immediately following successful completion of the NG, parents may be more inclined to frame them as a success. However, if the interview was completed six months later and the child's behaviour had deteriorated following returning to their mainstream class, they may view it as a failure. Secondly, the authors do not identify how they define or measure 'success' in either the parents or staff view.

Kirkbride (2014) presented a piece of exploratory research aiming to provide insight into the perceptions of parents and NG staff regarding parental involvement. Kirkbride (2014) completed eight semi-structured interviews, four with parents and four with NG teaching assistants. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and a comprehensive account of the processes the authors used is provided (For a list of themes see Appendix 1). Triangulation of data using different measures would have strengthened the data. Overall, Kirkbride's (2014) findings suggest that effective communication is key in maintaining relationships between home and school. This needs to be clear, two-directional, non-judgemental and empowering for all parties which is in line with previously recognised good practice (Bishop, 2008; OFSTED, 2011).

Methodologically, Kirkbride (2014) fails to provide information regarding the type of NG sampled ('classic' or 'variant') and any training NG staff may have had. They do indicate an all-female sample which is interesting in relation to the composition of staff to pupils. NGs traditionally include more boys than girls and female staff, which is the case in this study. The authors do not describe the sampling methods used in selecting their participants. This is particularly important for research that includes parent's views to prevent bias. For example, an opportunistic sample could result in a parent group who are invested in the NG and omit the views of those who are socially isolated from the process.

Kirkbride (2014) matched the four NGs based on age range (6-7 years), size of group (n=10), staff numbers and job role which adds strength to the sampling in providing data from a homogenous group. However, additional contextual information for school settings identifies one school as a specialist provision (all other schools are mainstream primary) with a significantly smaller number of children on roll compared to the other participating schools (see Appendix 1). In addition, one of the schools has a significantly higher proportion of children entitled to 'free school meals' which indicates a higher level of economic deprivation for the children of this school compared to the others.

Kirkbride (2014) suggested the use of a strengths based model of parental involvement that builds parents feelings of capability and identifies a clear role for parents within the NG. This is in line with Taylor & Gulliford's (2011) findings that parents of NG children may have previously been involved in only negative discourse with a school (for example, attending a meeting to discuss their child's negative behaviours). This can lead to a feeling of judgement and avoidance from the source which results in reduced parental engagement. Kirkbride's (2014) suggestion to increase the opportunity for parent-staff communication through the implementation of specific meeting times, goes against Taylor & Gulliford's (2011) findings that a more formal meeting may be avoided by parents. An appropriate middle ground could be a solution to increase opportunity without increasing formality (for example, coffee/tea mornings for all parents and staff).

2.3.3 Children's perspectives of NG Experiences

The United Nations Convention (1989) on the 'Rights of the Child' placed focus on the voice of children and young people in matters that affect them and is reflected in UK legislation (DfES, 2001; Children & Families Act, 2014). Given this legal obligation, it is unfortunate that researchers have not routinely given a voice to NG children in their studies; instead opting for additional measures that gain teachers' views (Seth-Smith et al, 2010; Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002) and more rarely, parents (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Taylor & Gulliford, 2011; Kirkbride, 2014). The lack of research including the child's

voice is not unique to NG research but is evident across the area of SEMH (Sellman, 2009) in Special Educational Needs (SEN) literature.

Four studies that included the child's voice were identified during the literature search (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013; Syrnyk, 2014; Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014). Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001) and Shaver & McClatchey were previously discussed (see section 2.3.1). Both studies do not go any further than to identify what children enjoy about a NG and neither ask about re-integration and therefore will not be discussed any further.

Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) conducted a study that focussed solely on developing a child centred methodology to obtain children's constructions of their NG experience. They sampled eight participants (aged 7-11 years) from one NG in Wales that adhered to classic principles, with children attending for between one and three terms before re-integrating back into their mainstream classroom. The methodology included a focus group with the following activities:

1. In pairs, discuss three things you like about the NG and feedback your partner's answers to the group.
2. On a post-it note, write down things that are the same and different in your NG compared to your usual classroom.
3. Using a circle time format with a teddy, discuss how NG makes you feel?

This methodology allowed the researchers to use less-threatening means of gaining children's views using activities children were experienced in through school and NG. Indeed, Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001) discuss how during interviews children gave guarded responses to questions around issues in their mainstream classroom, due to a feeling of loyalty/responsibility to their teachers'.

Although Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) present a child centred methodology, interactional power imbalances continue to exist between researchers and participants. Given the power imbalance between adults and children, demand characteristics still exist, although it is acknowledged these are reduced through the methodology. The authors also spent a day within the NG to develop rapport/familiarity with the participants and joined in with the activities. Although

this is beneficial in building rapport there is a risk of children associating the researchers with the NG staff and biased. This can create demand characteristics within the focus groups in relation to openness.

Two of the children included in this study had previously been re-integrated into their mainstream class on a full-time basis. This highlights a missed opportunity to gain insightful information on the re-integration process and how the children felt within their mainstream classroom following Nurture. It also presents an ethical issue in that children who have been re-integrated may, through reflection, develop feelings of nostalgia and this could affect future behaviour.

Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) used thematic analysis to develop themes from the focus group data which resulted in the following themes and sub-themes:

1. Environment- group size, familiar and comfortable surroundings, sharing breakfast and predictability.
2. Learning- scaffolding, rewards and recognition.
3. Self-regulatory behaviour- coping strategies, awareness, behavioural control and emotional control.
4. Relationships- friendships, availability, feeling like a family, belonging, predictability and trust.

It is an encouraging finding for the participating NG that these themes are in line with general NG principles (Insley & Buckland, 2006) and suggests adherence. The themes developed are also in line with Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) as discussed earlier (see '1.2.1 What are NGs?') and allow for attachments to be made with peers and staff. These findings are consistent with Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001) who, despite methodological difficulties, identified the quality of relationships with staff, nature of the environment, predictability of routines and opportunities for free play as the attributes of a NG children value.

Within relationships, children commented on the quality of their interactions with staff and how these were important to them which is in line with the teaching assistant's views (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005) discussed earlier (see section 2.3.1). Within the theme 'Environment' the sharing of food was found to be of importance to the children as well as having a familiar environment that they could predict.

Children were also able to identify what learning strategies used within the NG had been beneficial to their learning. This is particularly important for re-integration as children will be able to use this knowledge to help them succeed in future learning and can be passed onto mainstream classroom teachers’.

Given the breadth and depth of the constructions presented by Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) and its alignment with theory and previous research, children hold a valuable insight into their own experiences and how they can use these to their benefit. This insight, especially around emotive topics is often underestimated by parents and teachers’ (Kadzin & Weisz, 1998) and highlights the importance of their inclusion in the research.

2.3.4 Studies including the child, parent and staff perspective of a NG

Through completion of the systematic literature search it became apparent that although children, parents and school staff are all simultaneously involved in the effective running of a NG, researchers do not seek the views of all participants. This indicates a failure of researchers to gain insight into NG interventions for all those invested.

The literature search identified one piece of research that included all stakeholders in a NG, although this focussed on secondary NGs and therefore will be discussed in relation to methodology in the main. Garner & Thomas (2011) aimed to identify parents, young people’s and school staff’s views on the role and contribution NGs make to their schools. Three NGs were used to sample six young people (two from each NG), 18 members of staff and an unreported number of parents. The six-young people (majority in year 8) who were currently accessing or had accessed a NG in the past year, took part in individual interviews with the researchers. The authors do not provide any information about the interviews other than they felt this was the most suitable methodology, given the sensitivity of the topic. Therefore, it is unknown if the interview questions were suitably matched the research aim.

Within the interview group, the young people took part up to a year after re-integrating into mainstream classrooms may have a different viewpoint to those

currently attending. With reflection and consideration, views of an experience in our lives change and will reflect our current situation. The authors do not indicate the distribution of young people interviewed in relation to attendance of NG.

Although information is omitted in relation to methodology, Garner & Thomas' (2011) findings do align with previous research using the primary school population. They also identify developments for future practice, which in the relative early implementation of NGs in secondary schools and differing variants is useful to practitioners. There was also an alignment in views between children and adults in what was effective practice and what could be developed further, indicating value in consulting all parties. The authors could have furthered this collaborative methodology through the sharing of themes and generating discussion around these.

2.3.5 Re-integration of Children from NGs to Mainstream Classrooms

The systematic literature search identified four pieces of research (Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997; Doyle, 2001; Syrnyk, 2014) with a focus on re-integration of NG children into mainstream classrooms.

Iszatt & Wasilewska (1997) conducted a longitudinal study with 308 NG children and reported that 87% returned to their full time mainstream class less than a year after starting the intervention. In addition, 83% of these remained in this mainstream setting with only 4% being moved to a specialist setting due an inability to meet need. Iszatt & Wasilewska (1997) also included a control group who met the admission requirements for a NG placement however due to capacity could not access the provision. From this group, 35% were moved to a specialist setting as schools could no longer meet their needs. Due to a lack of matching of these groups, we are not able to conclude that the NG provision prevented a significant number of children needing specialist provision. However, we can conclude the NG may have provided them with an advantage over those who did not receive this intervention. Although this finding suggests that children can be successfully re-integrated back into their mainstream classrooms within a year, it does not provide any details on what successful practices attributed to re-integration

The NG Network (NGN) 'Making It Count' (NGN, 2014) publication of independent consultations includes one study on re-integration entitled 'The Wirral Re-Integration Report'. This study asked mainstream teachers' and NG staff to complete a confidential questionnaire on current re-integration practices and identified two central issues:

1. The extent and quality of communication and collaboration between the NG and mainstream class teachers'.
2. The extent to which the mainstream teacher had got to know the child attending the NG previously.

The lack of joint working between NG staff and mainstream teaching staff can lead to tensions and a lack of understanding of the desired outcomes, which is reflected in Cooper & Tiknaz's (2005) findings of the importance of communication for effective joint working (see section 2.3.1).

Without effective communication mainstream teachers' report NG children to be significantly further behind in their academic work (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005), which can lead to decreased engagement in the lessons. Children's views furthered this with difficulty of the task, longer waiting times within/between activities and a lack of instruction being identified as aspects of the mainstream classroom that NG children find difficult (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). A lack of academic progress whilst children attend NGs is not a consistent finding with many making significant progress (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Seth-Smith et al, 2010; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013).

The Wirral Re-Integration Report (NGN, 2014; 'Making it Count') highlights the tensions resulting from differences in behaviour management in NG compared to the most commonly used 'behaviourist approach' in mainstream classrooms. Development of secure attachments requires consistency in response to develop an effective internal working model (Bowlby, 1973; Wallin, 2007) and therefore behaviour management practices are significant for re-integration. The presence of NG's in a school can impact upon the approach teachers' take to behaviour management, with teachers' having a greater awareness of SEMH needs and effective strategies to engage these children (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Whole school changes take time and therefore may be more

evident in schools with established NGs, with good communication links to the wider school environment.

Successful re-integration into a mainstream classroom also appears to be affected by the amount of time a child spends within the NG. Mainstream teachers' reported children being more strongly attached to the NG than their mainstream class (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005). The length of time spent in a NG is recommended as two to four terms with highest level of cognitive development and engagement in education being seen in the first two terms (Sanders, 2007), with a slower continuation of development in terms three and four (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005).

Although two to four terms are recommended, there has been a lack of focus on identifying readiness of a child to re-integrate (Doyle, 2001). There is currently no universal method to measure readiness for re-integration into a mainstream classroom, or guidance of how to do this other than it should take a gradual approach. Currently, NG practitioners use the Boxall Profile as a measure of suitability for intervention and this provides a profile of needs that should be targeted within the NG. The Boxall Profile is completed termly to identify progress against these targets and when they are met, re-integration begins (NGN, 2016, 'Nurture Groups'). Success within the NG is therefore dependant on the target set as opposed to children's Boxall Profile's now being in the average range. Doyle (2001) developed the 'NG Re-Integration Readiness Scale' to aid NG staff in identifying small step targets that could be incorporated into a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). These could then be the focus within NG and the mainstream classroom throughout re-integration, providing a consistent approach. Doyle (2001) presented three case studies outlining the measures successful use. However, use of this measure on a wider scale than the one NG discussed has not been reported.

Syrnyk (2014) takes a different approach, using a nurture approach as a means of integrating children into a specialist primary provision for children with significant SEMH needs. As an evaluative measure of the approaches effect on integration, Syrnyk (2014) asked children to complete a drawing of their classroom and the people in it, followed by an interview. Data was collected at two-time points:

1. One and a half weeks after entry to the school (T1).

2. Five weeks after T1 (T2).

Using the principles of Kinetic Family Drawings (KFD; Burns & Kaufman, 1972; Knoff & Prout, 1985) the drawings were analysed and identified that most of the children (n=4) included all their peers and teachers' in their drawings. Overall, the adults in children's drawings became two times smaller between Time 1 and 2, indicating that the adults are becoming less dominant figures. Syrnyk (2014) also suggests that the smaller size of the adults within the children's drawing's indicate that children's relationships with teachers' may have become less positive, relating this to previous research (Burkitt et al, 2003; La Voy et al, 2001). During interviews, children identified they liked the different teaching approach, school work, opportunities to play and access to food at the special school and identified only physical differences in the environment.

Although this research does not focus on NG re-integration specifically, it is important as it uses a nurture approach to manage the transition from mainstream to specialist provision.

2.4 Summary of Systematic Literature Review

The research literature has provided evidence of the effectiveness of NG's on a child's SEMH pre-and post-intervention, however the quality of these studies varied widely in a recent systematic review (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014). The studies that have been conducted have been small in scale and the type of NG intervention appears to depend on what type of nurture the school subscribes too. This has resulted in a lack of studies available for meta-analysis and growth of the evidence base. Taking specific measures at specific times across the network to grow a homogeneous pool of data to allow for statistical analysis would be beneficial. Since the commissioning of provision is now the responsibility of individual schools, a disjointed network of NG provision across the UK has emerged. This may affect scope to recruit larger sample sizes that are adequately matched to a control group, as schools individualise NGs to meet the specific needs of the school (See 'Introduction' chapter for descriptions of NG variations).

There is a significant lack of longitudinal studies with only one being cited (O’Conner & Colwell, 2002) within Hughes & Schlösser (2014) and one additional source being found by the researcher (Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997). Although both these studies report positive long-term effects the quality of both studies prevent causation from being interpreted. With the limited research on long term outcomes there has also been a lack of focus on what happens to NG children immediately after they leave the NG, in terms of what programme of re-integration (if any) they follow and the subsequent effects of this for SEMH.

NG’s vary in the level of parental involvement they chose to engage in and this appears affected by the variant/type of NG used, staff ranking, formality of meetings and the level of two-directional and purposeful communication (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011; Kirkbride, 2014). Although parental involvement has been shown to be key factor in maintaining intervention change (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997) it is an under researched area in NG’s (Bishop, 2008). Although parental involvement does not appear to influence initial pre-and post NG effectiveness measures (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011), it may be a significant factor for re-integration and long-term success and this data is not currently available.

Children have traditionally been excluded from research in relation to SEMH (Selliman, 2009) with researchers preferring to gain quantitative measures from teachers to measure perceived progress. In order to gain an effective measure of a child’s experience a child-centred methodology needs to be employed (Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014) which can provide depth and breadth. Currently, studies have focussed on what children enjoy within NG’s and have not addressed children’s perceived experience following their re-integration into mainstream classrooms.

Overall, there is a distinct lack of evidence or knowledge in relation to a child’s experience of outcomes once a NG comes to an end.

2.5 Rationale for Current Study

Research into the effectiveness of NGs has included in the majority measuring changes in social and emotional development using questionnaires such as The

Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) and SDQ (Goodman, 1997), pre- and post- NG intervention. Although the improvement of social and emotional development is a desired outcome for NG intervention, the long-term maintenance of this development is essential for successful, long term success in education.

Given the differences in behaviour management practices across schools and within schools between NG and mainstream, it is likely that a process of transition will be required to maintain these changes. To date, research has not focused on what models of transition are being used with our NG children or if this intervention is effective in the long term.

The critical reflection of staff and parents on the process of re-integration is crucial for the development of effective practice in achieving long term success. With time and opportunity for reflection on practice often being limited, it is important to create this space and develop a portfolio of practice based evidence that can be shared. This is not reflected in current research despite being a critical aspect of the SEN Graduated Approach and development of staff skills. The current research aims to encourage this critical reflection of staff to improve the outcomes of the children they work with.

Given the distinct lack of evidence into current practice in relation to the re-integration of children from NG provision into mainstream classrooms, the purpose of this research is to explore the current practices/strategies being used to re-integrate children from a NG provision into a mainstream classroom, to gain information on how children perceive their new classrooms following this re-integration and discover the part parents play in the re-integration process.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Data Collection

3.1 Introduction

Within this chapter the specific research questions I aim to address are outlined, the epistemological position is described (critical realism) and the strategies used for data gathering are outlined (individual interviews with children and focus groups), including identification of participants and ethical consideration.

A clear description and justification for the data analysis (thematic analysis) and procedure is outlined and attempts made to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the qualitative methods used to ensure the quality of the research.

3.2 Research Aims & Questions

The current research aimed to explore the views of parents, NG staff and school staff on the specific strategies used to transition children who attended a nursery NG into their mainstream reception classrooms. The following research questions were addressed:

1. What strategies are being used transition reception age children into mainstream classrooms after attending a 'NG' during their nursery year?
2. What are parent's experiences of the transition of their children from a nursery 'NG' into a mainstream reception classroom.

In addition, the study aimed to identify what children transitioning from a nursery NG into a mainstream reception classroom identify as important aspects of that environment. The following research question aims to address this:

3. What objects, people and places within the mainstream school are important to children who attended NGs in their nursery year and why?

3.3 What is Ontology & Epistemology?

Research methodology should be grounded within an appropriate ontology (theories about the nature of reality) and epistemology (how we access that knowledge), with each deciding what the researcher views as 'meaningful' data and what strategy will best access this (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

Creswell (2014) describes four main philosophical worldviews (ontologies) that are discussed within research paradigms: 'post positivist', 'constructionism', 'transformative' and 'pragmatic'.

The post positivist ontology takes the view that there is an objective reality within which specific causes will consistently lead to specific effects. These 'realities' can be observed, tested and replicated through the manipulation and controlling of variables (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Transformative research aims to change the lives of individuals who are marginalised, confronting social oppression through empowering participants (Mertens, 2010). Pragmatic researchers focus on what methods work, finding solutions to problems and applying this knowledge (Patton, 1990). Those taking a constructionism perspective, view individual's as seeking understanding of the world they are part of (practically and culturally) and using experience to generate complex meaning for phenomena.

3.3.1 Ontological Position of the Current Research

The previously described ontologies sit on a continuum from 'realism' to 'relativism' and the researcher's position on this and their research aims will determine the appropriate methodology. Realism assumes a reality exists that is entirely separate from human influence and identifies 'mind independent truths' (Tebes, 2005)- a post positivist ontology. Relativism reflects an individual's interpretation of a phenomena, taking account of their personal knowledge base, which leads to multiple constructed realities (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). This position on the continuum lends itself well to a constructionism worldview. 'Critical realists' sit in-between the two with a view that there is a real and knowable world that is hidden behind subjective and socially located knowledge (Madill et al, 2000). This position on the continuum lends itself well to transformative and pragmatic ontologies.

The current research takes a critical realism ontological worldview, positioned within the traditional positivist and constructionist approaches to science. Critical realists

position is that there is no possibility of using experiments to gain a single, “correct” understanding of the world, what Putnam (1999) describes as a “God’s eye view” without the influence of numerous individual’s values and beliefs. Matthews (2003) identifies the following key features of a critical realist approach:

- Aims to explore causal mechanisms.
- Examines the underlying mechanisms that cause life events to happen rather than observing the event itself.
- Knowledge is continually evolving with research rejecting and accepting a varied range of hypothesis.
- The role of systems (simple and complex) are included in the research as opposed to traditional experimental conditions.

Within the research literature, the views of children and parents have been largely underrepresented compared to that of teachers, in the transition of Nurture Group children, relying largely on standardised measures such as the Boxall Profile. This denies the contribution of mental states and attributes, including the meanings and intentions of parents, staff and children during this period of change and possible challenge. For realists, mental and physical entities are equally real, although they are conceptualized by means of different concepts and frameworks (Putnam, 1999). The incorporation of ‘cause’ into a critical realist position acknowledges the current use of observing association between variables. Whilst causation is the ultimate goal for realists (Strawson, 1989), critical realists position it is a starting point to exploring an individual’s reality. Putnam conceptualises this incorporation of causality and individual perception as follows:

“whether causation “really exists” or not, it certainly exists in our “life world.” . . . The world of ordinary language (the world in which we actually live) is full of causes and effects. It is only when we insist that the world of ordinary language is defective . . . and look for a “true” world . . . that we end up feeling forced to choose between the picture of “a physical universe with a built-in structure” and “a physical universe with a structure imposed by the mind.” (1990, p. 89).

The current research poses the practices employed by parents, Nurture Group teachers and school staff are the in-built physical structures, however these are affected by many variables that cannot be controlled for as in realist paradigms, such as a parent's motivation to be involved in their child's transition.

The inclusion of all identified key stakeholder (parents, children and staff) incorporates the wider complex systems operating in the lives of Nurture Group children which will all have a different and noteworthy effect on a child's transition. Whilst critical realism rejects the idea of 'multiple realities' in that the world is solely socially constructed by different individuals or societies, the idea that there are different valid perspectives on reality is accepted. The use of language to describe our reality is impacted by culture, class, gender, age and profession and well as a wealth of other factors. Perceptions of a phenomena will be affected by their own experiences and perceptions of events based on these experiences. Critical realism respects the validity perspectives we obtain from participants, as well as ourselves are part of the 'real' world we are hoping to gain a greater understanding of. Therefore, the various viewpoints from key stakeholder in the current study are respected as valid and true to their world and acknowledges the impact these have on those around them, specifically Nurture Group children.

The researcher considered the possibility of a 'constructionism' ontological worldview which defines knowledge gained from research as:

"Socially constructed by people active in the research process. Researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it." (Shwandt, 2000).

This type of research originated in studies of interpretive understanding of meaning (Clegg & Slife, 2009) in which the researcher tries to understand what the individual is trying to communicate in the context of culture and time (hermeneutics). This is in opposition to a positivist worldview that considers the participant in a specific moment in time, independent of the world and generalises findings to those deemed similar. The constructionism worldview is based on the following assumptions (Crotty, 1998):

1. Humans construct meaning through engagement with the world.
2. Interpretations are based on the individual's historical and social perspectives.
3. The basic generation of meaning is always social.

The decision not to take this position is based on the realities that exist within a school system and policies that exist around transition of children from nursery to Primary school. I feel these are not generated in a socially constructed world, but are instead dictated by the policies and procedures individual schools employ.

In summary, the current research takes a critical realist position when exploring the process of transitioning nursery NG children into mainstream reception classes. The critical realist position is evident in the current research through inclusion of all key parties involved in transition (children, staff and parents) and promotes the use of these under-represented participants views in informing change, therefore promoting social change (House, 1991). This approach allows the researcher to also acknowledge there being a real and knowable truth, through the use specific transition practices employed by schools based on their school policy. This truth is confounded by the additional individual strategies used by the individual schools and parents to meet the needs of specific pupils. These additional measures are based on an interpretation of need, by multiple individuals which will be based on their own individual construction of that need, and what specific support would be firstly suitable and secondly available within their specific school environment.

The proposed research aims to explore parent's, NG staff and mainstream school staff's experiences of re-integration of children from a NG into a mainstream classroom; as well as children's views on what is important to them in mainstream school. This incorporates three main systems (home, NG & mainstream schools) that are intertwined in a complex relationship that surrounds the child who is the common factor in each. Each system has specific and yet different responsibilities for the child and therefore the approach, motives and beliefs held by members of each system will be based on differing realities. The researcher recognises that each participant will construct a different meaning of the transition process, based

on their own individual interpretation and the possibility that these may be conflicting.

Although the individual nature of the experience of transition is acknowledged the proposed research also aims to:

1. Identify experiences of good practice within the LA.
2. Encourage information sharing of good practice and peer support.
3. Facilitate a joint problem solving/solution focussed platform.

The researcher aims to identify what processes/strategies are held in positive/negative regard with the view to developing a bank of good practice ideas for future NG transition practice and therefore takes a pragmatic approach.

It is the aim of the research that strategies and good practice for transition from NG's into mainstream classes will emerge from the data and could be useful in informing future transition practices, whilst allowing for adaptation based on an individual child's need and development. In summary, the researcher aims to begin to identify and explore good practice in transition through the consultation of children, parents, NG staff and mainstream school staff.

3.3.2 Epistemological Position of the Current Research

Epistemology describes the relationship between the knower and what can be known and is intrinsically linked to a researcher's values, beliefs and ontological position (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It determines what society and the researcher determines as valid, trustworthy knowledge within a specific community. A criticism of much of the previous literature was to not include the views of all contributing parties to re-integration, specifically omitting to ask children what they felt was important (see Chapter 2 'Systematic Literature Review'). It is the researcher's belief that children can offer a significant insight into what was important to them and therefore they have been included.

It is the researcher's belief that children who attend NG's display a wide spectrum of needs regardless of their categorisation ('Social, Emotional and Mental Health', SEN Code of Practice, 2014) and respond differently to intervention, regardless of how similar their needs are. However, the intervention, transition procedures and school policies provide a constant truth based in pragmatic practices. The subjective and individual nature of a child's previous experiences as well as the use of transition practices when transitioning NG children is linked to my epistemology and the previously discussed 'critical realism' worldview.

The applied nature of researching transition following a period of intervention is particularly pertinent to the work of Educational Psychologists and a critical realist epistemology offers a robust and appropriate methodology that incorporates practitioner's practices, as well as researcher values into a study of real world experience (Kelly, Woolfson & Boyle, 2008). Robson (2002) highlights the approach acknowledges:

- The role of values in methodology
- The theoretical nature of facts
- That reality is complex, multiple and constructed
- Data can be explained by more than one theory

The current study explored three complex systems (home, school and NG) as well as a larger, unquantifiable number of simple systems (e.g. friendships), involving many individuals within the same phenomena of transition. The critical realism provides a methodology that allowed the researcher to value each of these aspects whilst reflecting on their own views.

Campbell (2002) argued that "all scientists are epistemological constructivists and relativists" believing in both the truths of the world we live in being based on the ideologies of those orchestrating (p. 29). Critical realists assume that there is a real world out there—but that our representations of that world are constructions. The research believes that consistent, evidence based transition practices will be effective in successful transition and I recommend these often for teachers to put into place. It is also my belief that the success of these recommendations are set in the motivation and the skills level of the practitioners, which is my construction and

judgement. This was important to acknowledge in the current research in order to not limit the identification of practice to those I viewed as transition practices as opposed to the views of the participants. The experiences of the researcher and their own discourse will affect how they interpret the participants' views in relation to understanding how they make sense of the world (Potter & Wetherall, 1987). It will be important but also challenging for the researcher to acknowledge this subjectivity and include it in the analysis of any data.

The data the researcher obtains is reliant of the chosen method of enquiry and how this is performed. For example, the current research uses focus groups as a strategy and the resulting data is dependent upon the questions the researcher asks to promote initial discussion. The researcher acknowledges they are not objective in this process. The questions asked by the researcher are pre-determined as an appropriate means to address the research questions; and not to gain an overall view of each participant's experience of transition.

The differences in epistemologies between groups of participants and systems is also significant in what they believe to be the dominant discourse (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985 & 1999). For example, a dominant discourse within the home may be that physical discipline is acceptable for certain actions by a child; whereas schools may use a behaviourist approach that uses consequences and a NG may ignore the perceived negative behaviour. As the system and therefore discourse changes, so does the perceived truth to fit within the specific cultural, moral, ideological, political and social context. This also creates power differences within the systems epistemologies that the researcher must acknowledge and address through appropriate methodology.

3.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experience of re-integrating children who have attended a nursery NG into their mainstream reception classroom from the perspectives of parents, NG staff, mainstream staff and children. The study aims to identify good practice that is currently being used

to re-integrate children and use this to inform future practice. At this stage in the research, transition practices will be generally defined as:

“The strategies being used by NG staff, mainstream teachers’ and parents to help children who have attended NGs settle into the differing environment of a mainstream classroom”

3.5 Research Design

The proposed research uses qualitative methods to address the outlined research questions. Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (2014) as:

“... an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.” (Cresswell, 2014, pg. 4)

The qualitative paradigm allowed the researcher to view the relationship between the person and the context as more fluid and reciprocal, with influences in both directions. This is particularly important for the current research due to the reciprocal effect each system has upon the other. For example, successful development of a child’s social and emotional well-being through NG intervention may lead to wider effects of improved behaviour and family functioning within the home environment. In the same notion and using a previous example, continual physical punishment at home may make transition to mainstream reception class more difficult despite the mainstream school staffs efforts. The individuality of a child’s experiences and the systems they are part of are accepted as a relevant factor within qualitative methods. This allows us to place meaning on the process of transition as opposed to how successful/unsuccessful it was which would take more of an evaluative/positivist approach.

The current research uses experiential qualitative methods (Reicher, 2000) as opposed to a critical approach with the focus being of exploration and validation of individuals' meanings, perspectives and experiences. The interest of the current research is not to use data to evaluate the long-term NG success of re-integration strategies/practices, but to focus on the knowledge base available to build a richer understanding of re-integration.

Within a qualitative design the researcher is viewed as a key instrument, collecting data that is relevant to them and the research questions and not relying on questionnaires or measures that have been designed or used in previous research. The researcher will be collecting data to identify themes for transition practices as opposed to other data that may be available. For example, the researcher's focus is not on the feelings of the mainstream school staff within the transition process although this may emerge through data collection. The subjective nature of the researcher in identifying what questions will be asked to provide meaningful data was previously discussed (see section 3.3.2).

Although the researcher asked only relevant and prescribed questions during data collection, the use of a qualitative design allows for flexibility within this emerging design. This has many benefits that a quantitative method would not, such as allowing the researcher to adjust the wording of questions to aid the understanding of young children and ask additional follow up questions that may not be relevant to all individual's experiences. As the focus is to prioritise, accept and interpret individuals experiences this flexibility allows the researcher to create a feeling of value and increase the richness of the data that may not result from the use of a questionnaire.

Qualitative research uses multiple sources of data collection (interviews, observations, focus groups etc.) to gain a rich set of data that is most useful to the research questions. The variation in data collection strategies that can be used within qualitative methods allows the researcher to be much more flexible in

their approach. This is particularly important in ensuring sensitivity towards participant groups and ensuring this includes a data collection strategy that produces the richest data. For example, the age of children and their developmental ability to engage in data collection can be accounted for more easily than in quantitative methods.

Finally, qualitative designs allow for the gathering of multiple perspectives to gain a broader picture of the phenomenon. The current research aims to gain the perspectives of all three systems involved in transition of NG children (home, NG and mainstream school) to produce a holistic account of the process, possibly identifying unknown factors. Quantitative designs often involve the grouping of 'participants' based on demographic information or variables deemed important to difference. The aim here is not to highlight difference but shared experiences and future developments.

A number of data analyses were considered for the current study, with each method having its own strengths and weaknesses that require exploration in relation to usefulness in answering the research questions. The researcher considered the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis where the researcher interprets the participants' interpretation of an experience from a critical lens that questions why participants have interpreted an experience in a particular way. The current research questions are not focused on why the participants have interpreted the process of transition in a particular way, or the social influence involved and therefore IPA was ruled out.

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) is not an analytic method but a qualitative approach to data collection and aims to build theory from the data collected (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). Through this approach the researcher aims to identify influencing factors and social processes that underpin a phenomenon. Although this seems relevant to the research questions in identifying processes, this type of research requires a larger participant pool until data saturation is met (same codes/themes emerging in numerous participants) and a homogenous participant group, which are not compatible with the current research.

Discourse Analysis (DA) looks for patterns of meaning or language across linguistic datasets and positions psychology as outside the person in the social world, within social interaction (Potter & Wetherall, 1987). The primary focus of DA is to discover and interpret social positions, positioning and power through language and these factors are not relevant to the current research questions.

Thematic analysis is the most appropriate analytic approach to data analysis in relation to answering the research questions. The current research questions are interested in the 'what?' in relation to transition as opposed to 'why?' and 'how?' and includes a small number of participants. The 'complete coding' of thematic analysis allows for the most meaningful codes in relation to the research questions to be identified as opposed to those that occur most frequently (content analysis). Therefore, a theme is described as:

"A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006; p82).

Developing themes is an active process that involves immersion in the data to identify undiscovered patterns (Taylor & Ussher, 2001) and therefore different researchers can identify different patterns (Smith, Coyle & Lyons, 2007). Working as an independent researcher prevents the checking of data for missed codes/themes via colleagues and is a weakness of conducting research as a sole researcher.

The strengths and weaknesses of thematic analysis are outlined by Braun & Clarke (2014; p180) and can be found in below:

Table 3.3- Strengths and Weaknesses of Thematic Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Flexibility in terms of theoretical framework, research questions, methods of data collection and sample size.	Lacks the substance of other 'branded and theoretically driven approaches like IPA and Grounded Theory.
Accessible to researchers with little or no (qualitative) research experience.	Has limited interpretive power if not used within an existing theoretical framework; in practice analysis often consists of descriptions of participants concerns.
Relatively easy and quick to learn, and to do, compared to other more labour intensive qualitative analytic methods.	Lack of concrete guidance for higher level, more interpretative analysis.
The results of thematic analysis can be accessible to an educated wider audience (useful for applied research).	Because of the focus on patterns across datasets, it cannot provide any sense of the continuity and contradictions within individual accounts and the voice of individual participants can get lost.
	Cannot make claims about the effects of language use (unlike DA, DP, or CA).

3.6 Research Participants

The research aims to explore the transition practices/strategies that are used when children move into mainstream education from the perspectives of three invested parties; the children, parents and the staff. This section outlines the strategy used to select participants, participant demographics, group composition and sample size.

3.6.1 Sampling Strategy

A **purposeful sampling** strategy was used to ensure participants were selected that had the appropriate knowledge and experience of re-integrating NG children into mainstream school. This “generates insight and in-depth understanding”

(Patton, 2002; 244) of the experience from those who have lived it and developed a rich knowledge as a result.

Within the LA children with identified 'social, emotional and mental health' needs have the opportunity for NG provision in settings if this is part of their provision map. Two settings in the local area provide NG provision in the nursery year, as early intervention, and many of the children transition to a linked school for their reception year. Mainstream primary schools that are linked to the nursery NG provisions as feeder schools (a school that children would be expected to transition to within their local geographical area) were **purposefully sampled** to identify the following participants:

1. Children who currently attend mainstream reception who previously attended a nursery NG.
2. The parents of the children identified above.
3. NG staff from the two identified nurseries.
4. Mainstream reception class teachers' who are receiving the children identified above.

With this sampling strategy, all individuals taking part in the research are connected through their relationship with the child. Therefore, data is triangulated around the child and represented in the figure below:

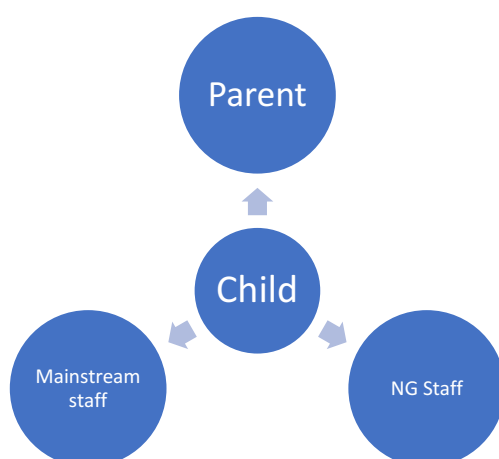


Figure 3.1: Relationships between participants

Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria is identified in the table below:

Table 3:4 Participant Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Participants	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<i>Parents</i>	Parents of children currently in reception year that have attended NG provision in their nursery year of education.	Parents of children who attended NG provision for less than 2 terms.
<i>Staff</i>	NG provision staff/mainstream school reception year staff who have received children from the linked NG provision.	
<i>Children</i>	Have attended a NG provision for at least 2 terms in the nursery year of education. AND Currently attending reception year in mainstream education.	Children who attended NG provision for less than 2 terms.

The decision to exclude children who had not spent a minimum of two terms within the NG from the research (and the associated parents) was taken in response to the research literature. Previous research identifies that for NG provision to be effective a child must attend for a minimum of two terms and a maximum of four (Connor & Colwell, 2002). Although the intention of the current research is not to evaluate effectiveness, it is likely that children who attended for less than the required two terms either did not have sufficient need or would not have benefitted from the intervention. Both factors will affect their experience of transition to mainstream school as well as the experience of their parents. Mainstream staff may also not have been made aware of these children if they were not currently attending the provision at the time of transition which may also affect the strategies

they put in place to re-integrate and, ultimately, the data. As nursery year includes only three terms there was no need to exclude children who had attended for four terms or more.

3.6.2 Participant's

A total of nine children from a possible 12, four staff (two mainstream and two NG) from a possible ten and four parents from a possible 10 were sampled using the inclusion and exclusion criteria across the two schools. The total sample size was constrained by the sampling strategy and the relative rarity of Nursery NGs in comparison to Primary School provision within the LA. However, there are “no rules to sample sizes within qualitative research 2” (Patton, 2002:244). Sample size is generally affected by:

“what you want to know, the purpose of your enquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done within the available time and resources” (Patton, 2002:244)

The specific inclusion/exclusion criteria applied to this study results in a smaller sample size due to availability of participants that could be sought within one LA. What the specific inclusion/exclusion criteria provides is a focussed piece of research that has the potential to provide in-depth knowledge about NG transition practices, with a specific population within the participating schools.

Demographic information of participants, schools and NG information can be found in the tables below:

Table 3.5: Participant Demographic Information

Participant Group	Total Size	Gender	School/NG (NG)	Age Range	Ethnicity
<i>Child</i>	N=8	Female=2 Male=6	School 1: N=5 School 2: N=3	Aged 4-5 years old	White British: N=7

					Black British: N=1
<i>Parent</i>	N=4	Female=3 Male=1	School 1=4	3x 31-40 1x 41-50	White British: N=4
<i>Staff</i>	N=4	All female	NG 1: N=1 NG 2: N=1 School 1: N=2 School 2: N=0	31-60 years old 1x 31-40 1x 41-50 2x 51-60	White British: N=4

*one child participant was excluded from the study due to absence from school preventing participation in the semi-structured interview phase (see section 3.6).

Nine children took part in the first phase (see section 3.6) of the research however one of these (from School 2) was not able to take part in phase two and was therefore removed from the study. This increased the dominance of 'School 1' child participants.

Numbers of child participants were near to equal from each of the two schools and a ratio of 4:1 of boys to girls was found between genders (20% female to 80% male), which is in line with boys having higher access to NGs provision. The child participants represent a majority white British ethnicity with only one participant identifying as black British (represents 11% of the total sample). This is slightly higher than local demographics cited by the 'Office for National Statistics' (Office for National Statistics: 2011 Census) taken in 2011 which identified the local area population as 84.08% 'white British' and 4.52% 'black British', but may represent a more up to date figure. It is acknowledged that although 11% of the total sample size is non-white, due to the small sample size this reflects only one participant and therefore is positively skewed.

All staff who participated in the research were female in line with the dominance of females within the caring and education profession. One school is not represented within the staff participants (School 2) as they did not feel this would be beneficial for them.

Parent participant inclusion

The parent focus group was made up of parents from one of the two schools and represented a total number of three pupils out of a possible nine children. This included one set of separated parents, a mother and a grandmother. All parents were recruited to the study through school invitation to attend the focus group and providing the relevant information and consent forms home (see Appendix 13). One additional parent could not attend due to a lack of childcare and due to withdrawal of participation from one school taking part, these parents could not be approached for participation.

One of the parent participants was a lunchtime member of staff at the school who had access to 'insider' knowledge in relation to practices being used within the school environment and the skill level of the staff involved, which could also have been shared with their family member. This is knowledge that a parent not working within the school or with access to staff members opinion would not normally have. This may create bias in the results in relation to the knowledge of parents in school policies and procedures as well as everyday practice. This participant was included in the study due to the primary caring role they play for a child participant and gave an additional, yet unique contribution, with many parents working within their child's school.

Table 3.6: School/NG Information

School/NG	Type of Setting	Type of NG Provision	Location (rural, town, city)	Size & intake	OFSTED Rating
<i>School 1</i>	Mainstream Primary School	Variant	Village	429 pupils; male and female; ages 4-11.	Outstanding
<i>School 2</i>	Mainstream Primary School	None	Town	228 pupils; male and female; ages 3-11.	Good
<i>NG 1</i>	Local Authority run Nursery School	Classic Boxall 6-8 pupils	Village	64 pupils; male and female; ages 3-5.	Outstanding
<i>NG 2</i>	Nursery School within School 2	Classic Boxall 6-8 pupils	Town	26 pupils; male and female; ages 3-5	Good

The table above outlines a normal size difference between Primary and Nursery schools although the sizes of each Nursery school and Primary school is recognised with ‘School 1’ and ‘NG 1’ being substantially larger than ‘School 2’ and ‘NG 2’ and this is due to the locational difference. The town location of the latter

means there is a higher number of nursery and primary school provision available, whereas the former covers a larger geographical area with less provision available.

‘School 1’ also provides a ‘variant’ type NG which children with need can access on a part time basis whereas ‘School 2’ does not provide NG support.

3.7 Strategies for Data Gathering

Within this section the data gathering methods are outlined and include child semi-structured interviews and focus groups (staff and parent groups). Further participant selection rationale based on the data collection method is also outlined.

3.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews with Children

The children’s semi-interviews used a participant directed photo elicitation method which allowed children to take ownership of their interview through the following two stage process:

1. Children were given a camera and asked to take photographs of people, places and objects important to them in their classroom and school.
2. On a separate occasion, the children were interviewed on a 1:1 basis with the researcher in which they discussed the pictures they have taken together.

This resulted in the following two phases of research:



Figure 3.2: Phase model of child data collection

Phase 1

This method of using photo elicitation as an interviewing method for young children has the following benefits:

- The use of photos as a tool to generate appropriate questions that are relevant to the child's experience (Clarke-Ibanez, 2004).
- Useful for discussing topics that are vague/difficult to define (Allen, 2009).
- It is a developmentally appropriate way of allowing children to express their thoughts and feelings (Clarke-Ibanez, 2004).

Drawing on the benefits of child-centred methodologies (Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014), allowing children to take their own pictures and using these as the focus point of the following semi-structured interviews provides a sense of control for the children. Given the SEMH needs of the participants and their age, providing safety and constraints within the semi-structured interviews was particularly important for participation.

Phase 2

An interview is defined as, "a professional conversation" (Kvale, 2007) with the goal of getting a participant to talk about their experiences and perspectives, and to capture the children's language and concepts on the topic you have selected (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Within the photo-elicitation method the children's development in various areas is accounted for and the demands on language are greatly reduced within interviews with children being able to reference non-verbally through pointing at their pictures. The element of reducing language demands within this population is particularly important with language deficits/impairments being a common characteristic of NG children and linked to insecure attachments (Grieg et al, 2008). It also provides a structure to their conversation and increases their level of power in relation to the researcher, with the conversation entirely directed by them.

The current research used a semi-structured interview format (a list of guiding questions can be found within section 3.7) which was felt to be more flexible than

a structured interview format when working with young children. A semi-structured interview allows the researcher to stay “on target while hanging loose” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:42) and allows the children to discuss what is important to them (a main aim of the study). The current research used face to face interviews which are thought of as the ‘Gold standard’ (Novick, 2008) and have the following relevant strengths (Braun & Clarke, 2013:80):

- Rich and detailed data about individual experiences and perspectives.
- Flexible: you can probe and ask unplanned questions.
- Smaller samples: you often need only a small number of interviews to generate adequate data.
- Ideal for sensitive issues: a skilled interviewer can get people to talk about sensitive issues.
- Accessible: can be used to collect data from vulnerable groups such as children and people with learning disabilities.
- Researcher control over the data produced increases the likelihood of generating useful data.

3.7.2 Focus Groups with Parents and Staff

Two ‘focus groups’ took place, one with the parent participant group as well as one with NG staff and mainstream school staff group. The use of focus groups allowed the researcher to create a formal but not highly structured format (Morgan et al, 2002) to guide, as opposed to dictate, the discussion. Brinkmann & Kvale (2005) identify focus groups as having the following characteristics:

- Non-directive style that aims to gain a variety of viewpoints on the same topic.
- The group moderator decides on topic, facilitates and guides the discussion.
- An open environment where participants can discuss differing points of view.

Focus groups allow participants to disagree, ask questions to each other which provides a more complex and detailed data set. The advantages of using focus groups include (taken from Braun & Clarke, 2014; pg 113):

- Unexpected or novel knowledge (Wilkinson, 1998a).
- Real life conversation that uses natural vocabulary and natural topic discussion (Kitzinger, 1994b; Wilkinson, 1998a).
- A wide range of views, perspectives and understanding of an issue (Underhill & Olmsted, 2003).
- Don't require prior knowledge (Frith, 2000).
- Neutralises the power imbalance between researcher and participant as the discussion is with each other and not the researcher (Liamputtong, 2007).
- Can produce social change through raising consciousness of a topic (Morgan, 1997).
- A key focus on the social interactions seen in complex social situations (Hollander, 2004).

The group size of a focus group varies (Krueger & Casey, 2009) in research with groups between three and eight participants being described as the most successful in gathering meaningful data (Braun & Clarke, 2014; p115). Too large a group results in not enough time being available for all participants to be heard and in-depth discussion of a view, and too small a group can limit the total level of discussion. The current research included four participants in the staff group and four within the parent group. One important factor for consideration in the formation of focus groups is the level of heterogeneity and homogeneity in each group and the impact of this. For example, it would have been possible to have separate focus groups for NG staff and mainstream school staff which would have resulted in a more homogenous group. However, this would have reduced the level of challenge, sharing of practice and raising of social consciousness of the issue. The parent group is a homogenous group in that they share characteristics of having children of the same age, who have attended NGs in nursery.

The current research aims to bring together mainstream and NG staff which provides a forum to challenge, support and reflect on current reintegration practices within a more naturalistic environment (Wilkinson, 1999). This conversational style of data collection is more suited to exploratory research compared to an interview format (Wellings, Branigan & Mitchell, 2000) in which the researcher dictates the

data collected. Given the lack of research focussed on transition in NG research the exploratory focus group is appropriate. The more naturalistic environment also provides a supportive environment which may have added benefits for the parent group, allowing group discussion of a shared experience of children with similar needs.

Timeline of data collection

Due to delays in the University Ethical Clearance procedures, the researcher was not able to commence the research until June 2017. The child participants took part in July 2017 which was the last month of their reception year and they were preparing to transition to school Year 1. Their attachments to their school environment at this point would be expected to be clearly embedded although may have changed during the course of the year.

Due to the summer holidays the parent and staff focus groups could not take place until October 2017. This presented an issue due to the focus group discussion focussing on the transition from nursery to reception taking place the children's transition from reception to Year 1. This could have led to confusion when thinking about transition and difficulties in remembering the experience of a transition that occurred a year previously. The staff and parent focus groups occurred within a week of each other and therefore there was consistency in the amount of time following nursery to reception transition the focus groups took place (this is discussed in more detail within the Discussion Chapter).

3.8 Procedure

The proposed research has two sources of data collection from three participant groups that are triangulated around/from the child who has experience of transition from NGs into mainstream classrooms. This is represented in the figure below:

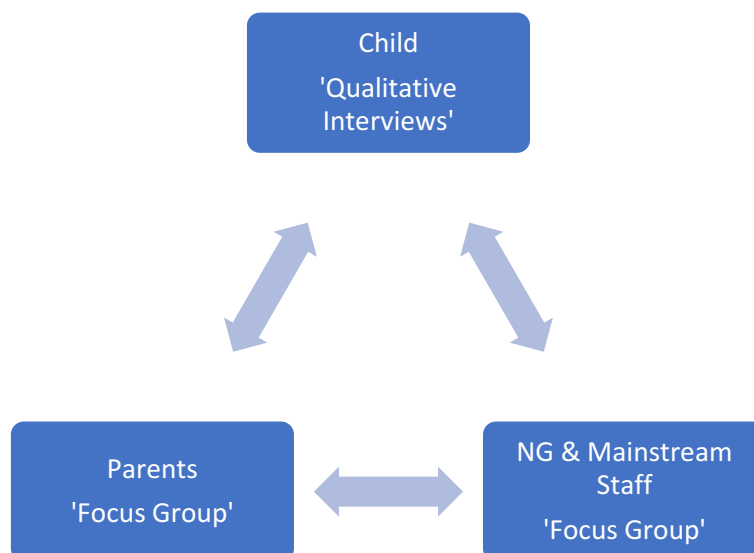


Figure 3.3 - multiple sources of data collection

Parents and staff were also asked to complete a short survey prior to the focus group commencing and are not a source of data to be analysed but aim to focus the participants and enrich the researchers understanding of their responses. The purpose of including a short survey prior to participating in the focus group was twofold: firstly, to allow participants to reflect on their current knowledge and focus on the research topic; and secondly to provide the researcher with a context for the knowledge and practices around transition and parental involvement within the school environment.

3.8.1 Child Interviews Procedure

The procedure used for child interviews using participant directed photo elicitation was as follows:

Day 1

- *the researcher attends the school where the group of children attend and in a quiet room provides each child with the 'Participant Information Sheet' (see Appendix 2).*
- *Within the presence of a member of school staff participants will be individually walked around the school and asked to take pictures using*

a tablet of any area/objects/people in the school that are important to them.

- *Participants are informed that two copies of the photos will be developed' one set for them and one for the researcher and we will talk about them when I return the next day.*

Day 2

- *The researcher returns to the school to meet with participants on a 1:1 basis with the developed photographs.*
- *Participant interviews will be held on a 1:1 basis with the researcher in a room separate to the classroom that is familiar to the child without disruptions and providing confidentiality.*
- *Participants are asked to lay out the photographs on a table and asked:
"What is your favourite picture?"
"Why did you choose to take this photograph?"
"What is important in this photograph?"*
- *Follow up questions to gain a richer more detailed account will be asked. Such as "What games do you play here?", "What things in this area do you like?".*
- *Participants are thanked for their participation and given their own copy of their photographs to take home.*
- *Interviews last a maximum of 20 minutes.*

Two types of data were be collected during this stage of the research; the photographs that the children take as well as audio recordings of the individual interviews for transcription.

3.8.2 Focus Groups

The focus group moderator was the researcher who was supported by a Psychology Assistant employed by the LA. The procedure for running the focus groups as follows:

- *Participants enter the focus group room and are given the chance to mingle and share tea and cake for approximately 15 minutes.*
- *The facilitator discusses group rules that are detailed visually on a flip chart (confidentiality, recording, what the research will be used for).*
- *Consent forms are reiterated, signed and collected by the Psychology Assistant.*
- *Participants are asked to complete a short survey, including demographic information (see Appendix 3 & 4).*
- *The main topic and aim for the discussion was experiences of what does and does not work in the transition of children from NG's to mainstream classrooms?*
- *The facilitator followed the focus group guide produced by the researcher in Appendix 5 & 6.*
- *The total time for the focus group discussion was 45 minutes.*

Focus groups were video recorded to provide accurate audio data for transcription in addition to qualitative observational data that can be used to analyse group dynamics. In addition, the Psychology Assistant completed an observation focussed on the group dynamics and contribution of the group members (see Appendix 7).

3.9 Data Analysis

The data from child interviews and focus groups was transcribed using orthographic transcription in which all actual words and utterances (includes non-semantic words) are transcribed. This method allows the researcher to capture not only what the participants say but also how they express themselves using local vocabulary and expression (DeVault, 1990). Transcriptions will be anonymised in relation to names, school names and specific local area information and pseudo names will be used instead.

The specific method of data analysis used was thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify themes and patterns of meaning across each participant group. Braun & Clarke (2006) identify a theme as something that:

‘Captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.’
(p.82)

Further analysis of the data using thematic analysis can develop a critical, constructionist analysis that identifies concepts and ideas in data. The data analysis will be inductive as opposed to being guided by theory, meaning the themes emerge from the data as opposed to being sought based on an existing theory. Although this allows the data to ‘speak for itself’; the researchers view, epistemology and knowledge of the topic area will affect the identification of and importance given to each theme. Thematic analysis is completed in seven stages defined by Braun & Clarke (2006):

1. Transcription- data preparation.
2. Reading and Familiarisation- taking note of themes of potential interest.
3. Coding- complete across the data system.
4. Searching for Themes- developing emergent themes.
5. Reviewing these- production of ‘thematic maps’ to find connections across emergent themes and generate superordinate themes.
6. Defining and Naming Themes- repeat stages 3-5 with data items.
7. Writing- finalising analysis producing a figurative/tabular representation of the data.

The specific strengths and weaknesses of thematic analysis and its suitability for the research data can be found in section 3.5. Given the researchers limited experience in conducting qualitative research it is useful to follow a prescriptive structure as outlined above, as well as recognising the subjective nature of the chosen analysis.

3.10 Qualitative Trustworthiness

Qualitative research, unlike quantitative, acknowledges the influence the researcher has on the research process and the resulting findings. Through engaging with participant’s, we aim to access the knowledge participants hold on the reintegration and use this to develop our knowledge base (Yardley, 2008).

Quantitative research aims to minimise the effect of the researcher to present an objective truth and replicability, with its reliability evaluated on this basis. The resulting data produced in the current research is based on the researcher's skills in interviewing children, moderating focus groups and thematic analysis. It is also influenced by the level of knowledge the researcher holds about reintegration on a wider scale in practice. Therefore, the researcher's role is not to produce a replicable, reliable study; but rather to access the multiple realities that exist for the participants and bring these together within a psychological framework.

A qualitative design has validity as a strength as it explores 'whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account' (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). Validity in the pure sense refers to research showing what it claims to show as a truth/reality (Goodman, 2008a) and is not relevant to a qualitative and constructionism world view. Ecological validity however, refers to the relationship between the research and the real world and is a strength of the current research design. The research is meaningful to the researcher as they interpret data in relation to the research questions. It is relevant to the participant as it interprets their views and places an additional responsibility on the reader to reflect on what aspects of the research is relevant or comparable to their own reality.

The purpose of meeting reliability and validity criteria is to enable generalisation of results across populations similar to the participants sampled. The generalisability of results across all NG reintegration practice is not the purpose of this research. It does however aim to provide detailed interpretation of current practice in the context of the participants sampled and relate this to psychology. This provides a level of transferability through following the psychological principles of practice, whilst preserving the flexibility of others to adjust their practice within their own individual setting needs.

The following strategies were used to address validity (trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility; Cresswell & Miller, 2000) quality criteria:

- Triangulation of data.
- Providing rich, thick descriptions to provide readers a more realistic experience.
- Clarify researcher bias through self-reflection to create an open narrative to interpretation.
- Present evidence that does not fit/contradicts themes and provide possible explanations.

The current research uses two different forms of data gathering strategies (semi-structured interviews and focus groups) and three participant groups (parents, staff and children) who are all linked via the same experience and to each other. This triangulation of data in this research aims to gain a richer picture of reintegration as opposed to a more accurate one, capturing multiple truths about the shared experience (Smith, 1996).

The researcher took the following steps to maintain reliability in the data analysis through proof reading transcripts, following the stage process of thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), ensuring there is not a drifting in the definition of codes through cross-referencing and the use of the 'Thematic Analysis Checklist' (Braun & Clarke, 2006; page 96).

Table 3.7: Thematic Analysis Checklist

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
Analysis	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
Overall	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as <i>active</i> in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

3.11 Ethics

The researcher adhered to the guidance set out in the British Psychological Societies (BPS) “Code of Ethic and Conduct” (BPS, 2009) and “Principles for Conducting Research with Humans” (BPS, 2010). These documents set out the basic standards of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity of the researcher. The researcher also received ethical approval from the University of East London through the School of Psychology’s ethics process (see Appendix 8).

Within qualitative research the potential for harm can be more uncertain due to the fluidity of research designs. For example, the researcher cannot control exactly what a parent says in a focus group and therefore there is the potential for feelings to be hurt. As the moderator, I had a clear ‘focus group guide’ for both the staff and parent groups (see Appendix 5 & 6) to maintain focus of the discussion on process as opposed to personal abilities. Therefore, minimising the risk. Children were protected during their interviews through the child-centred methodology of photo elicitation and framing of the task on positive aspects of their school.

3.11.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent for the children who participated was obtained using the following procedure:

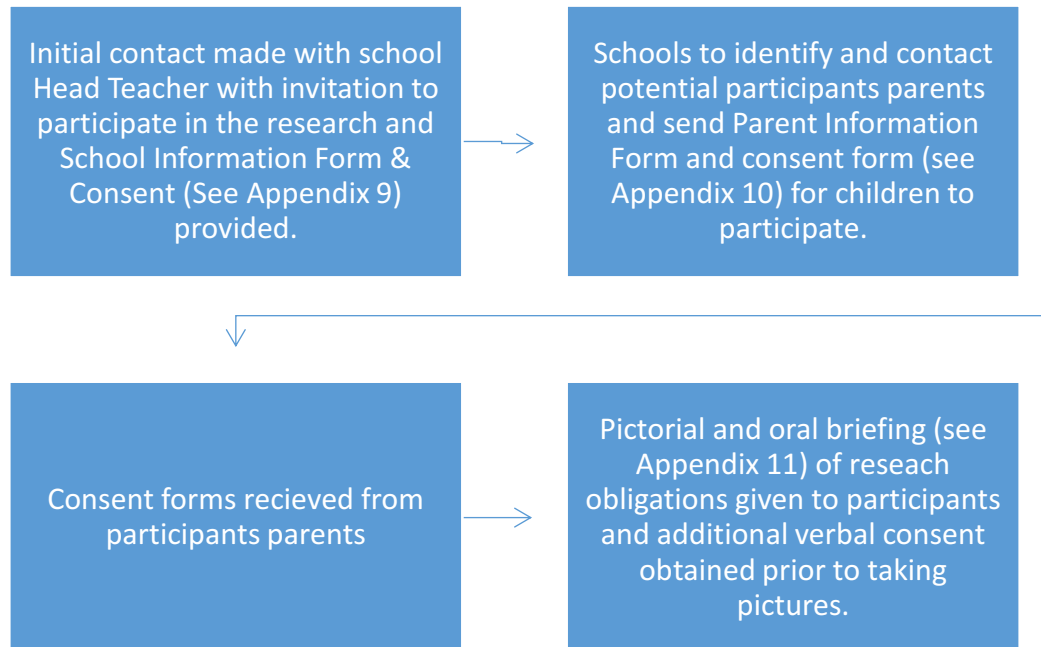


Figure 3.4: Informed child consent procedure

Informed consent was obtained for the parent focus groups through the following process:

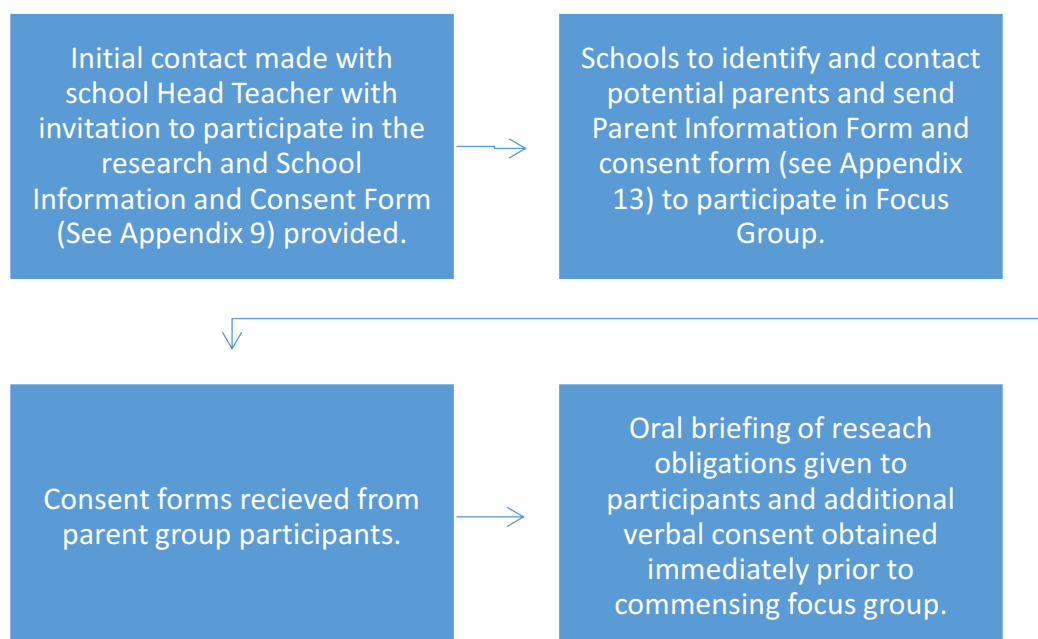


Figure 3.5: Parent focus group consent procedure

3.11.2 Confidentiality

All data was anonymised to not include uniquely identifying markers to any individual participant, including individual names, schools and aspects of local practice; whilst maintaining the meaning in a specific context (Guenther, 2009). Confidentiality is difficult to ensure due to the small sample size of and the uniqueness of their experiences, however the data as much as possible will be not personally associated with a participant. All information relating to any participants was kept in a secure location and destroyed following the research period ending. Participants were provided with confidentiality procedures within the 'Research Information Form' (see Appendix 10) and the limits of this discussed at the beginning of each focus group.

3.11.3 Withdrawal of Participation

Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the research and the time frames they could request this within the 'Participant Debrief' (see Appendix 12). All participants had the right to withdraw at any point during their active participation (during the interview or focus group). In relation to the removal of data, focus group participant's data could not be removed following participation as this refutes the whole data set disrupting flow. Individual interviews may be removed prior to data analysis but could not be after as this would involve a complete re-analysis of the data. No data can be removed following commencement of the research period.

3.12 Researcher Bias

This critical reflection on the research process and one's own role as a researcher is integral to the qualitative process (Finlay, 2002a, 2002b) and requires consideration to insider and outsider positions (Gallais, 2008). Within the current research, the researcher is an adult in a school and therefore a person of authority in relation to the children. This power imbalance may have effected results in relation to children being overly positive towards the school environment. The title of 'Trainee Educational Psychologist' from the presiding LA also brings a formality

and authority to the adults and a desire to portray themselves in the most positive light. It may also provide parents with the opportunity to discuss any hidden feelings of dissatisfaction with the school and lead to an overly negative viewpoint.

The findings presented are reflective of the researcher's background and experiences such as gender and school experiences. The patterns within the data that were identified and coded, are those of relevance within the researchers framing of the subject, this comes from current understanding learnt from previous experiences. The researcher is a female from a predominantly working-class background and had many 'risk factors' present throughout her childhood. The researcher also possessed many protective factors and a nurturing school experience was one of these (although not a Nurture Group), therefore a subconscious bias may exist in importance of this for successful future life outcomes.

The researcher aimed to reduce researcher bias using focus group guides (see Appendix 5 & 6) and the photo elicitation methodology (see 3.8.1). However, in order to gain rich information, the researcher asked probing questions, increasing the risk of researcher bias. The researcher limited probing questions to those related to the research questions, for example asking about specific attributes of importance for pictures of teachers' (child interviews).

Researcher bias is a factor in all qualitative research and regardless of measures put in place to minimise this, interpretations will always be shaped by the researchers social, political and cultural viewpoint.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This findings chapter aims to illustrate the key themes related to the research questions deduced from the qualitative data collected. Specific information in relation to participants (number, demographics etc.) are presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 3), and the transcriptions referred to throughout this section can be found on the accompanying CD.

This chapter firstly presents survey data collected to provide context to the research questions and an initial understanding of the participants current knowledge base of transition of NG children. As discussed in Chapter 3 a map of themes was produced using the codes identified in the transcriptions across the entire data set and a 'Thematic Map' produced (see figure 6). This chapter will discuss each of the themes and provide example quotes directly related to these, highlight themes specific to participant groups and finally connectedness across themes.

4.2 Survey Data

Both the parents and staff who participated in the research focus groups (N=4) were asked to complete a short survey immediately prior to the focus groups for two reasons; firstly, to stimulate their thinking around the topic in question; and secondly to gain information about prior knowledge of the subject.

Staff were asked to rate their knowledge on a sliding scale (1-10) with 10 being the most knowledgeable on a variety of topics. The results are presented below:

Table 4.8: Staff Survey

<u>Question</u>	<u>Responses</u>
<i>How much guidance have you been given on running a NG?</i>	Respondent 1*: 8 Respondent 2*: 8 Respondent 3**: 1 Respondent 4**: 1

<i>Please rate your knowledge of running a NG.</i>	Respondent 1: 8 Respondent 2: 8 Respondent 3: 1 Respondent 4: 1
<i>How much guidance have you been given on re-integrating NG children into mainstream classrooms?</i>	Respondent 1: 4 Respondent 2: 6 Respondent 3: 1 Respondent 4: 1
<i>How much knowledge do you have in re-integrating NG children into mainstream classrooms?</i>	Respondent 1: 4 Respondent 2: 6 Respondent 3: 1 Respondent 4: 1
<i>What level of participation do parents have in NG?</i>	Respondent 1: 8 Respondent 2: 9 Respondent 3: 1 Respondent 4: 1
<i>What level of involvement do parents have in the re-integration of their children into mainstream classrooms?</i>	Respondent 1: 2 Respondent 2: 7 Respondent 3: 1 Respondent 4: 1
<i>How do you measure long term effects of NG provision?</i>	Early Years Foundation Stages from nursery to end of reception Welcomm Assessments Boxall Profiles Informal discussions

*Respondents 1 & 2 represent NG Staff

**Respondents 3 & 4 represent school staff.

The survey data highlights a clear difference in the amount of knowledge of NG support and transition for NG staff and school staff. This suggests that transition practices are more of a pro-active practice for NG staff with school staff appearing receptive. Another important aspect is the difference in the level of parental involvement disclosed pre- and post-transition with this decreasing dramatically. School staff had less awareness of how to assess a child who has attended a NG compared to NG staff and were not actively involved in this process other than being asked to complete annual questionnaires (specific questionnaire not named).

Parents were also asked to complete a short survey to rate their knowledge on a sliding scale (1-10), with 10 being the most knowledgeable on a variety of topics. This is presented below:

Table 4.9: Parent Survey

<u>Question</u>	<u>Responses</u>
<i>Please rate your knowledge of a NG.</i>	Respondent 1: 3 Respondent 2: 4 Respondent 3: 9 Respondent 4: 6
<i>How much knowledge do you have in re-integrating NG children into mainstream classrooms?</i>	Respondent 1: 2 Respondent 2: 1 Respondent 3: 7 Respondent 4: 1
<i>What level of participation do parents have in NG?</i>	Respondent 1: 1 Respondent 2: 1 Respondent 3: 9 Respondent 4: 1
<i>What level of involvement do parents have in the re-integration of their children into mainstream classrooms?</i>	Respondent 1: 1 Respondent 2: 1 Respondent 3: 9 Respondent 4: 1
<i>How would you rate your experience of re-integrating your child into mainstream school from the NG?</i>	Respondent 1: 1 Respondent 2: 2 Respondent 3: 9 Respondent 4: 1

Survey data indicated that respondent 3 scored much higher than all others for all questions. Parents generally felt they had a sufficient level of knowledge on the purpose of NGs. However did not feel they were actively involved in the NG or in the transition process.

Parents were also asked to complete a short 'Parent Engagement Survey' in which they were asked to rate their school engagement on a scale of 'almost never, once or twice per year', every few months, weekly, weekly or more' and responses are presented below:

Table 4.10: Parent Engagement Survey

<u>Question</u>	<u>Response</u>				
	<u>Almost never</u>	<u>Once or twice per year</u>	<u>Every few months</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Weekly or more</u>
<i>How often do you meet in person with your child's teacher?</i>	1	3*	0	0	0
<i>In the past year how often have you visited your child's school for any reason, apart from drop off and pick up?</i>	0	1	2*	0	1
	<u>Not at all</u>	<u>A little bit</u>	<u>Quite a bit</u>	<u>A significant amount</u>	<u>A tremendous amount</u>
<i>To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially?</i>	0	2*	1	1	0
<i>How confident were you in the school's ability to meet your child's needs in the summer before they joined?</i>	0	1	2*	1	0
<i>How confident are you in the school's ability to meet your child's needs now?</i>	0	1	1	2*	0

*Most common response

Parents met with their child's teacher approximately once or twice per year and this was for formal child teacher evenings as opposed to their child's SEMH needs. Overall, parents felt sufficiently confident in the school's ability to meet their child's needs and this confidence increased following their transition.

The surveys generated discussion immediately, with a staff member commenting on how little they had read in relation to transition compared to effectiveness literature. The surveys also generated discussion within the parent focus group in terms of knowledge of why children are identified as requiring NG support.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

Themes were generated from the initial coding of the data using a deductive process centred around relevance to the research questions. These were:

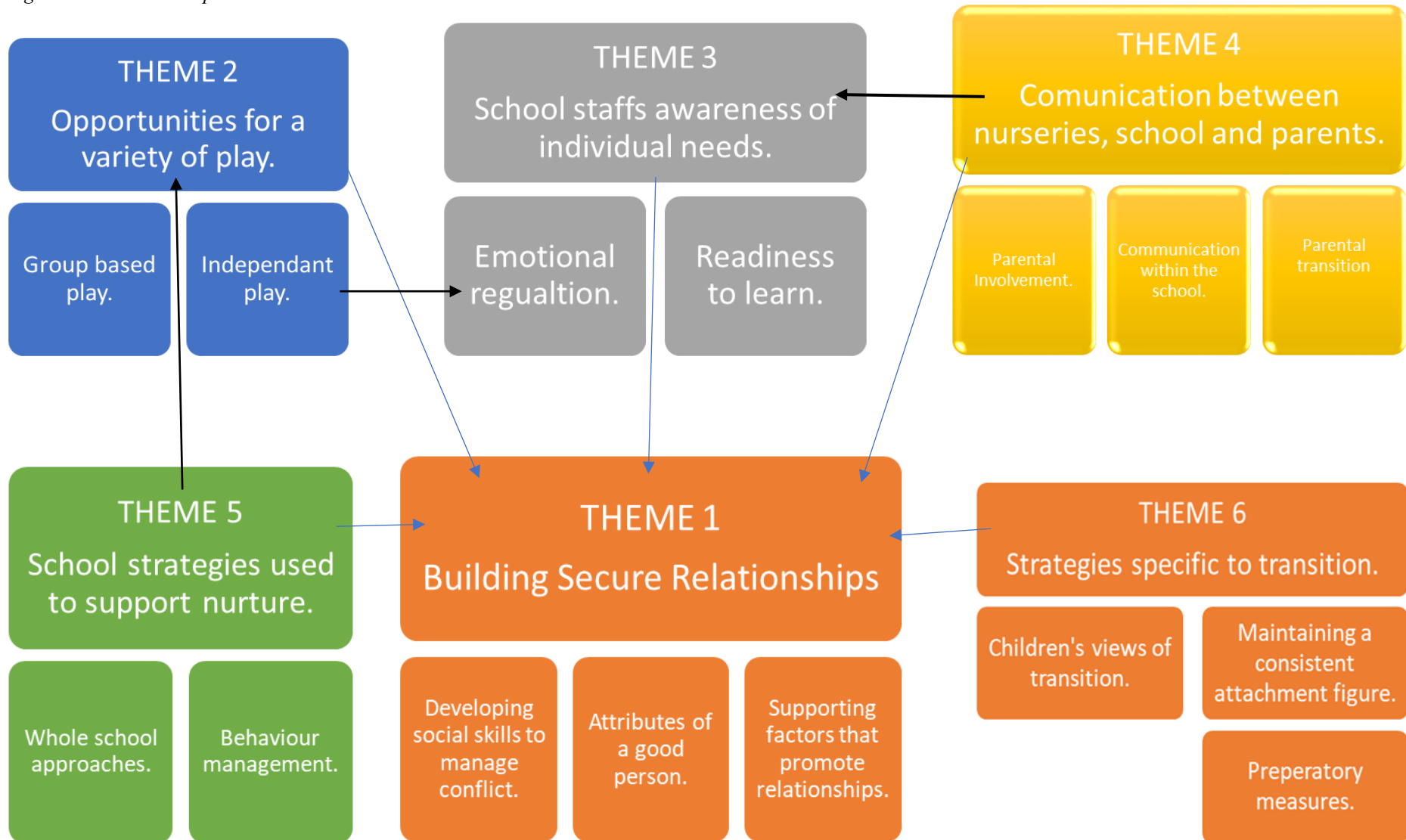
1. What strategies are being used re-integrate reception age children into mainstream classrooms after attending a 'NG' during their nursery year?
2. What are parent's experiences of the transition of their children from a nursery 'NG' into a mainstream reception classroom.
3. What objects, people and places within the mainstream school are important to children who attended NGs in their nursery year and why?

This process led to the formulation of 6 themes and 17 sub-themes and a map of these can be found in Figure 6. The themes identified were:

1. Building secure relationships.
2. Opportunities for a variety of play.
3. School staff awareness of individual need.
4. Communication between nurseries, schools and parents.
5. School strategies to support nurture.
6. Strategies specific to transition.

Themes 1 and 2 relate specifically to the individual needs the children identified and are related to 'Research Question 3'. Theme 2 related specifically to 'Research Question 1' and highlights the school staff's basis for implementing strategies to re-integrate NG children. Themes 4, 5 and 6 are related to both Research Questions 1 & 2' identify the current picture of support for NG children re-integrating through the experiences of both staff and parents.

Figure 4.6 Thematic Map



4.3.1 Theme One: Building Secure Relationships

The building secure and trusted relationships theme was a concept expressed by all participant groups (child, staff and parents) as an important enabling factor in relation to successful transition. Parents, staff and all child participants spoke of the importance of making friends and each child photographed at least one friend. The individual code of friends was the most referenced code across the data set accounting for 4% of the parent group, 3.5% of the staff group and ranging between 5%-26% of children's interviews. Six out of eight children photographed a teacher as an important person to them in school and parents also felt the teacher-child relationship was of importance. This theme relates specifically to research questions 1 & 3 as it identifies people important to the children and key relationships being a strategy used in the integration of children into reception. Building secure relationships and friendships were viewed by staff as a sign that children were ready to move on from the NG support and re-integrate:

"Sometimes towards the end I give them a choice of because sometimes when I come to get them they say I don't want to come to NG today I'm playing with so and so and so and I realise I've done my job as you're social and choosing your friend rather than spend time with adults so I don't force them to come in every situation." (Staff Focus Group, Page 1, Lines 29-32.)

The theme of 'building secure relationships' was divided into three sub-themes that that related to the main theme and are listed below:

1. Attributes of a good person.
2. Developing social skills to manage conflict.
3. Supporting factors that help to build relationships.

Each of these sub-themes will be discussed in turn using quotes from the data to illustrate.

Sub Theme 1 "Attributes of a good person"

The important people that children identified included their friends, teachers' and family members. The inclusion of family members in the children's interviews is

interesting as this discussion was not prompted by the pictures (children could not take pictures of their family at school) and six out of the eight children mentioned a family member.

“Researcher: Oh it’s the drawing table and do you do a lot of drawing?”

George: Ye

Researcher: What do you like to draw?

George: A picture

Researcher: What do you draw a picture of?

George: er erm my brother and my mummy” (George Interview, Page 7, Lines 313-324)

The children who participated found it quite difficult to identify what they liked specifically about the important people in their lives and this question was met quite often with a response such as ‘because he plays with me’, as opposed to a specific quality. Common responses across children included being kind, someone that wants to play with you and people they admire or look up to.

“Researcher: so what do you like about Rosie?”

Lilly: erm she is always kind. You know what she always does?

Researcher: What?

Lilly: she says to me everyday can we play with each other?” (Lilly Interview, Page 15, lines 460-467)

Children were more able to be specific about their teacher in their talk and spoke of their teacher in a more functional manner. Teachers’ were important in their function to make the children feel safe through helping them understand the rules, keeping them safe, providing positive affirmations, helping them engage in academia and supporting in group activities.

“Researcher: is she, why is she the best teacher

Lilly: because she she’s never bossy she always tells us what is the rules and never ever ever goes away and knows she won’t because she is so kind that we don’t want her to.” (Lilly Interview, Page 29, Lines 900-903)

“Researcher: she is, why is she your favourite teacher

Daniel: because she is beautiful

Researcher: she's beautiful, you think she's beautiful?

Daniel: ye, cos she helps

Researcher: she helps you

Daniel: ye

Researcher: what does she help you do?

Daniel: write” (Daniel Interview, Page 15, Lines 441-445)

In summary, the important people to the NG children in their reception class were their friends, teachers' and family.

Sub-Theme 2 “Developing social skills to manage conflict”

Conflict with other children was a common theme throughout the data set with both the staff and parent focus groups and five out of eight children reporting this as a difficulty they face following transition. The children discussed specific incidents with specific children whom they described as their friends.

“Researcher: You don't wanna play with George, why not?

Cooper: For a long time, cos it makes me hot

Researcher: makes you hot, what does George do that makes you hot?

Cooper: he goes in my way and then he runs and pushed me and then that makes me hot.” (Cooper Interview, Page 5, Lines 134-140)

“Researcher: And who do you play with the pirate with?

John: Jamie but sometimes we, but sometimes I get away from him because he makes me angry and well it makes my head blow off

Researcher: You don't want your head to blow off what does Jamie do that makes you angry?

John: erm, he sometimes says the wrong thing but we get better with each other once we sort the situation out.” (John Interview, Page 5, Line 127-137).

The children were also able to identify clear social skills that had enabled them to manage these conflicts using social skills such as saying sorry and making up.

“Researcher: huh, and what do you do to sort the situation out?”

John: erm we both say sorry to each other.” (John Interview, Page 5, Lines 138-140)

“Researcher: and what do you think would happen if you did have an argument?”

Lilly: we would fall out and we wouldn't be friends

Researcher: would you be friends later on or would you not be friends forever if you had an argument

Lilly: we wouldn't be friends. Sometimes it happens cos one of my friends fell out with me and they do you know what when Rosie falls out with me straight straight away she makes up

Researcher: Ok, straight away

Lilly: so does Stacie

Researcher: so it doesn't take very long then?

Lilly: no, just say sorry straight away and just do something else.” (Lilly Interview, Page 26, Lines 874-886).

Children did not discuss having conflicts with other children and not being able to manage these in the long term, suggesting confidence and proficiency in their ability to maintain their friendships. This is an important factor in feeling able to establish, develop and maintain secure relationships within the school environment.

Within both the parent and staff focus groups, unstructured times such as outside break times raised specific concerns in relation to the children's ability to manage themselves socially in this arena. Both sets of participants identified this area as an area of need that NG children find particularly difficult following transition as the situation is a novel event they have no experience of.

“Teacher 1: It’s that being in an environment with other children. It’s that lack of social skills. Just lack of understanding of what goes on really in a playground.

Researcher: the rules?

All: well it’s not really very structured so there aren’t rules.

Teacher 2: you go there and it’s just a blank piece of tarmac. What happens now? If you haven’t got an imagination. There are often not the best quality resources they’re used to the rest of the day. Hoops and balls are not enough to go round so immediately that’s a social issue. Survival of the fittest. I hate playground duty. (all laughed in agreement). “(Staff Focus Group. Page 11, Lines 377-344).

There was also a concern raised in the parent focus group that these difficulties may be longer lasting and widen as the NG children take longer to adapt to this environment.

“Parent 1: in him just saying he doesn’t want to go and then coming home upset about things that have happened. I think as they are getting older their friendship groups and... the thing is people won’t play with him but he only wants to play what he wants to play. He will not adapt to fit in with anyone else. Then if no one wants to play what he wants to play then no one wants to play with him. That’s what he thinks in his head. No you just need to fit in with someone else but he can’t. he wants to control everything.” (Parent Focus Group, Page 17, Lines 421-426)

This parent identified the ability of the NG children to adjust and be flexible in response to their friends as a specific need; this was expressed as a social skill that several the NG children found difficult.

In summary, the NG children identified conflict within their friendships that are typical of a reception age child and the foundations of social skills to manage these conflicts. There were specific concerns in relation to the speed of development of social skills as these friendships become more complex and ‘unstructured’.

Sub-theme 3 “Supporting factors that help to build relationships”

There were common factors within the data that appeared to support children in the initial building of relationships and ultimately to build secure relationships. Children consistently cited shared interests as a contributing factor as to why they were friends with a specific individual and this interest formed the basis of their play. All the children interviewed discussed their friends in relation to the activities they engage in together.

“Researcher: and why do you think Elsie like playing with you?”

Lilly: cos she always gets to play with things I like and we play together

Researcher: ok so you like the same toys

Lilly: ye, ye both like playing babies, me and Rosie likes the same babes and so does Stacey.” (Lilly Interview, Page 19, Lines 573-581).

In addition, children also discussed how they found having children they were familiar with from their previous nursery as a positive, even if they were not children who attended the NG. Having this secure base of existing familiarity or friends appears to have allowed the children to then socialise with new children in reception.

“Researcher: and why do you like Verity and Jodie, why are they your friend?”

Keira: because Jodie has been my friend since at Squirrels.

Researcher: So did you come here together, oh that's nice, isn't it, so you already had a friend.

Keira: ye

Researcher: if Jodie wasn't here, and you came over here what would it have been like?

Keira: there was loads of people from Squirrels. Not just us there were loads.” (Keira Interview, Page 6, Lines 165-178)

Staff also appeared to enable the process of developing relationships through providing structured opportunities to gain knowledge about their classmates (e.g. show and tell), provide positive affirmations and the management classroom

dynamics. Many of the children were dependant on their teacher to provide these initial opportunities for them and that their day wasn't as good if their preferred teacher was not around.

"George: cos she's my favourite teacher

Researcher: and what makes Mrs... your favourite teacher?

George: er er cos cos I'm a good person

Researcher: You're a good person. Does she tell you that?

George: Ye" (George Interview, Page 3, Lines 106-115)

Staff felt that NG children were not dependant on children they knew from the NG and this allowed them to manage classroom dynamics in an effective way.

"Teacher 1: the other thing is you might find you've got an imbalance in the two classes if you take all the NG children to one particular class. Depending on what their particular need is you might imbalance them. So in some ways you're better to split your NG children so that you haven't got such a high proportion." (Staff Focus Group, Page 15, Lines 501-504)

In summary all the children interviewed had developed and could discuss a relationship that was important to them from the school system and this added to their feeling of security within the school environment. The social skills they had practiced within the NG were being practiced and tested within a range of new social situations and this was facilitated by the school staff.

4.3.2 Theme Two: Opportunities for a Variety of Play

This theme related specifically to 'Research Question 3' for which children identified 'opportunities for a variety of play' as important through the high level of pictures taken of various toys/activities of importance. These toys/activities were also related to specific people who were of importance to them (see 4.3.1) but could also be an independent activity which led to the development of two sub-themes:

1. Group based play.
2. Independent play.

Children who attend school reception follow the Early Years Foundation Stages Curriculum which is also used in nurseries and provides two important aspects; firstly, following the same curriculum provides stability between transition; and secondly that learning needs and development is met through play as opposed to the direct teaching associated with school. This is particularly important for children with SEMH needs as it provides a secure, familiar base from which to continue to develop in a new environment.

Sub-theme 1 'Group based play'

The children interviewed identified three main play activities they like to do as part of a group/pair with their friends; imaginative play, physical play and construction games. These activities had a team based work ethic with children identifying roles for themselves and each other and working together to reach an end goal.

All eight children interviewed identified role play activities as an activity that was important to them. Imaginative play opportunities were often framed by a specific area in the reception classroom designed for this purpose and had props the children could use. For example, dolls and prams to play 'mummies and daddies' and an ice cream shop role play corner. The children also discussed the rules associated with such games and how the teachers' helped them to negotiate these.

"Lilly: it's the its the sunny and seaside café

Researcher: ye and what happens in the sunny seaside café?

Lilly: erm it's always er I never get to play in it but today I do

Researcher: Today you do?

Lilly: Ye cos all of the people who always play in that, they always play in and do you know what Mrs Baker does She always says she always gets the people are always go out and the people haven't gone in and there's only 4 people allowed." (Lilly Interview, Page 23, Lines 711-722)

This specific type of play allows the children to practice their social skills and learn from each other in a variety of imaginary but 'real' life type scenarios in a

safe and managed way. This is particularly important for children with SEMH needs who may struggle with their social skills.

Four out of the eight children identified outside physical play as an important area for them within the school however this was specific to the small reception class gardens used for child-initiated play throughout the day. This didn't extend to the bigger playground with only one child choosing to take a picture of the large school playground and this was specific to a climbing frame within it. As discussed in the previous theme (see 4.3.1) staff felt that outside playtimes/lunchtimes were particularly difficult for NG children and is echoed by the children interviewed.

"Lilly: all of them they ran out to do you what the rest went out to play and I missed it cos I don't actually like going out to play, that's good

Researcher: do you not like going out to play?

Lilly: er no

Researcher: why not?

Lilly: not on the big play ground

Researcher: why not the big play ground

Lilly: Name (older boy)

Researcher: who's Name (older boy)?

Lilly: NAME is a little boy who's that small, he's 6 and I'm 5

Researcher: ok and why what's wrong with Riley

Lilly: He always fights me, and and he always fights my brother too, and my sister does, she sticks up, she's actually brave, she say's leave my brother and sister alone, and he and then Name (older boy) is scared." (Lilly Interview, Page 20, Lines 590-615)

The physical play activities also met a need to generally run around and expel energy for two out of the eight children who found it more difficult to engage in more structured activities.

“John: erm, well, we both got into trouble because we didn't know what to do but know we don't get into trouble. Because we was little small when we got here

Researcher: What didn't you know what to do?

John: erm, I didn't know what we do in the inside, I couldn't do anything but I couldn't play football but I can play it now” (John Interview, Page 10, Lines 297-304.

“Researcher: why is that? why do you like playing outside better?

Daniel: I like playing outside best and er and inside boring

Researcher: insides a bit more boring?

Daniel: I like outside cos you can run around and get fresh air” (Daniel Interview, Page 13, Lines 390-396).

Physical play was identified by four of the eight children as an important activity to them, specifically taking pictures of things outside that are important to them.

The construction tasks identified as important by the children are the only activity that is gender specific, with only boys identifying these as important. All other play activities were across gender. Four out of the five boys interviewed discussed construction toys such as blocks, Magnetics and Connex as a group task they enjoy with their friends.

“Researcher: What do you do that's fun together?

James: do building

Researcher: So you and Dominic like building together. Is he a good builder or you?

James: Dominique's the best builder.” (James Interview, Page 2, Lines 66-70)

These tasks provide the children with an alongside play opportunity working on their gross and fine motor skills but also provides opportunities to watch and learn from others who may have advanced skills, and work as a team to build constructions linked to imaginative play.

Sub-theme 2 'Independent Play'

The children identified two important types of play they like to engage in independently (without other children) including creative play and sensory play. All the children identified at least one type of independent play as important to them and took pictures of these activities. Creative play is defined as art based tasks such as colouring, jewellery making, small craft work etc. This type of play was identified by three of the children and for one child made up 14% of the total discussion, second only to friends which made up for 20% of the discussion.

"Henry: This is Name (the TA) and me making ice cream

Researcher: And when you do your art do you do that with other people or do you do that by yourself

Henry: All by myself." (Henry Interview, Page 24, Lines 716-719.)

This particular child was dependent upon a teaching assistant to put on creative activities and did not engage in this play when she was not present, although this was not true for all children.

"Kiera: It's the colouring table

*Researcher: the colouring in table, ok
and what is fun about the colouring in table?*

Kiera: cos you get to do lots of drawing

Researcher: you get to do lots of drawing, do you like drawing

Kiera: yes

Researcher: what do you like to draw?

Kiera: a picture

Researcher: for people or just for you?"

Kiera: other people (Kiera Interview, Page 3, Line 63-83)

Six out of the eight children identified some form of sensory play as important to them and was coded in relation to tactile objects (e.g. teddies) and specific play (e.g. water/sand play). Two of the children opted for specific play to meet their sensory needs and the remaining four who identified sensory play as important identified tactile objects, resulting in two separate groups/preferences. Both

however served as an emotional regulation tool for the children either through cuddling teddies or repetitive sensory play (e.g. filling up a jug with water and emptying it into the water table repeatedly).

“Researcher: tell me about your pink doggy

Kiera: erm he's my favourite toy

Researcher: he's your favourite toy, and why is he your favourite?

Kiera: because she's my favourite snuggly toy

Researcher: is she lovely and snuggly?

Kiera: ye

Researcher: so do you snuggle her a lot?

Kiera: ye

Researcher: and how do you feel when you snuggle her?

Kiera: happy.” (Kiera Interview, Page 2, Lines 15-48)

Having tactile pieces of furniture as well as toys was also identified as important.

Researcher: Now you took a picture of the sofa and the bean bag as well

Lilly: Ye

Researcher: Why were they important in the Nurture room?

Lilly: Erm because the sofa, the sofa is, is snuggly too

Researcher: Oh I remember when we were in there we were feeling it weren't we? and it was all soft wasn't it

Lilly: Ye, and the bean bag is all squishy so I can get comfortable, It's nice and comfy and soft and squidgy. Like cake. (Lilly Interview, Page 9, Lines 258-272.).

In summary children identified that it was important to them to have opportunities for group play in which they could practice their social skills, work in teams, learn from others and develop friendships; and have time to participate in independent activities in which they can be creative or regulate their emotional state.

4.3.3 Theme Three: School Staffs Awareness of Individual Needs

This theme relates specifically to 'Research Question 1' in that for school staff to successfully employ strategies to aid transition they must first have a working understanding of that child's individual needs. The main presenting needs that staff identified are represented as the two sub-themes; 'Emotional Regulation' and 'Readiness to Learn' and are presented as a staged level of need, with children needing to acquire emotional regulation before they can be ready to learn. The children's views on what is important to them in relation to their needs is presented in the previous two themes (Building Secure Relationships & Opportunities to Play) and this section outlines some of the specific needs they highlighted in relation to emotional regulation and readiness to learn.

Within the Parent Focus Group, some parents discussed why their children were recommended for NG provision and these quotes aim to provide a context for the needs of some of the NG children who took part in the research.

"Parent 1: that wasn't the reason they put her into NG. It was more they tried to care for NAME (sister) and in doing that they kind of lost their own emotional responses to things because they were taking care of NAME (sister) so I think they kind of help them develop their own emotional responses to things rather than just "is NAME (sister) going to be alright?" Because she was doing it all the time wasn't she? And she ??? and NAME (brother) taunts her. It's a brother/sister relationship isn't it?" (Parent Focus Group, Page 4, Lines 92-97)

"Parent 3: NG I think to help children to .. put them in a small group to understand their emotions and to learn how to react and use their words to get results. That's what I thought with John, to use words instead of lashing out and even says that now. He is so good at using his words." (Parent Focus Group, Page 4, Lines 99-103).

Sub-theme 1 'Emotional Regulation'

A good example of how the children viewed their emotional regulation needs and how they manage them was described by John:

Researcher: what does it feel like if your heads gonna blow off?

John: erm it goes all dizzy like this arghhhh (spins head)

Researcher: oh wow a bit dizzy

John: ye

Researcher: Give you a bit of a headache

John: no it doesn't give me a headache

Researcher: It doesn't give you a headache, and what do you do when you feel like your heads gonna blow off?

John: erm my heads gonna blow off I have keep my head backwards, I have to keep my head with my hands like this, but it doesn't even hurt. Then when I do this (bang bang bang on chest) it doesn't even hurt. (John Interview, Page5-6, Lines 146-164)

None of the children interviewed identified school staff as people who helped them to emotionally regulate either directly or indirectly however the staff who took part in the focus group were acutely aware of this as a priority need of NG children.

“Teacher 1: A lot of them are emotional. That is the hardest one to meet because as a child in a group of 30 it's hard to give them that support. That is the difference you notice between nursery and reception. The ratio of child to adult is much higher and the emotional needs are the hardest ones to meet I think.” (Staff Focus Group, Page 10, Lines 313-316)

The school staff identified specific needs that they felt NG children presented with compared to their peers such as developing emotional language, difficulties managing lunchtime play, transitions and managing conflict with other children (see 4.3.1 Sub-Theme 2). This teacher was particularly aware of the need to settle NG children with a familiar adult when they entered the classroom:

“You target particular children with TAs just to help them come in in the morning and support them, activity time or sitting on the carpet, so just additional adult support and then there's just your usual behaviour

management as well for those children who might need a calm down box or something like that.” (Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 5, Lines 154-158).

The parents and staff agreed that NG children find the unstructured nature of playtimes and lunchtimes difficult which often resulted in anxiety and inappropriate behaviour:

“yes. I just think John is better if he knows just what’s coming next. What’s happening? He gets really bad anxiety and I just think that unstructured time is very chaotic and he doesn’t know where he fits in. He doesn’t know what he’s supposed to do and he’s not very good at figuring that out on his own so that’s why the structure is definitely better for him.” (Parent 2, Parent Focus Group, Page 18, Lines 451-454)

“they tend not to have the social skills to be able to play in that sort of time. It can be really rough or they can’t kind of maintain themselves or they need that kind of burst of excessive running around which can then get a bit out of hand. (Teacher 3, Staff Focus Group, Page 10, Lines 333-335.)

When initially discussing children’s needs within the focus group there was an interesting comment made by a teacher in relation to there being no needs as the children had attended a NG in nursery and therefore must now be ‘typical’. However, this teacher could effectively communicate an awareness of needs for NG children and report strategies they use to meet these needs later in the Focus Group.

“Researcher: so within you reception classes do you notice a difference between children who have been in NG and children who have come without being in NG. Do you notice a difference between them?

Teacher 1: well hopefully you don’t because that’s the point of nurture.

Researcher: so there aren’t needs that come up that way?

Teacher 1: they have already been met.” (Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 8, Lines 237-242)

The reason this comment is interesting to the researcher is not that it holds a true teacher belief of NG children entering reception after being 'fixed', but that the parents considered that teachers' did not have a great awareness of their children's needs.

"Parent 2: well I've tried to talk to them. Before he even started I insisted on having a meeting with the SENCO and Teacher 2 from (Nursery) to try and hand over everything they'd done with John because they'd done so much amazing work with him and hand it all over to the teacher but then his reception teacher said nothing sets him apart from anyone else he's fine..

Researcher: how did that meeting go?

Parent 1: the meeting was good. It felt like they were taking it all in but then it's never felt like they understood him and his ways ever since he's been here. For me they've just been like oh he's fine." (Parent 2, Parent Focus Group, Page 10, Lines 241-249).

In summary, school staff were aware of the emotional needs of the children who entered their classrooms and signposted staff (teaching assistants) and implemented strategies to support this, however felt this was a difficult area for them to be effective. Staff were more comfortable in the discussion of behaviour management as a strategy and the support provided by specific staff tasked with supporting emotional needs, as opposed to how they specifically meet these needs. This suggests a lack of confidence rather than knowledge as expressed by a parent.

Sub-Theme 2 'Readiness to Learn'

The sub-theme readiness for learning was discussed by both parents and staff in how prepared the children were to enter reception and engage in a more academic curriculum. This would be all children in reception introduction to formal learning in school as most of the school day is focussed around learning through child initiated play. The term formal learning here refers to a traditional style of teaching with direct teaching and practice using pen and paper formats.

The main needs raised from teachers' and parents were in relation to NG children having the confidence to participate in formal learning and having the concentration and attention skills required to look, listen and complete a task. One teacher felt confidence was the main issue in engaging NG children in learning:

*"No the emotional needs in that they don't feel confident enough to express themselves and to learn and to do things because they're constantly "I can't do that" or won't talk or something like that. That's the hardest one I think."
(Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 10, Lines 318-320)*

There was also a feeling that these needs were more long term and required longer term support:

"no it just maybe needs to continue a bit longer and that's down to funding. But certainly with my cohort last year we could do with a bit of support at the end of reception. They certainly weren't outward going and confident and ready to make mistakes and they could do with a little bit more of that but that varies from cohort to cohort. The cohort I've got now is fine but that particular cohort will need some more continued support." (Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 18, Lines 596-600).

There appeared to be a barrier with the NG children in terms of sitting down and writing with many opting for play based games as opposed to academic based tasks and this may be in relation to their emotional development. Two out of the eight children specifically identified writing as something they disliked and one felt he got into trouble for not being able to write:

"Researcher: and what was it like when you and George first came from (Nursery) to here?

John: erm, well, we both got into trouble because we didn't know what to do but now we don't get into trouble. Because we was little small when we got here

Researcher: What didn't you know what to do?

John: erm, I didn't know what we do in the inside, I couldn't do anything but I couldn't play football but I can play it now

Researcher: So did you get into trouble?

John: Ye, but only when I just started because erm I wasn't very good at writing.” (John Interview, Page 10, Lines 295-308)

The change in environment from a small nursery class and even smaller NG class was a concern for both teacher and parents with both groups stating the environment of a busy classroom and less staff making learning more difficult for NG children:

“For some children if it's like too much like George he's never going to learn anything. Nothing is ever going to go in in a busy crowded situation and he needs that quiet more... he prefers one on one or a small group. That's when he's better. In a big group there's just too much going on and he just gets lost.” (Parent 2, Parent Focus Group, Page 5, Lines 111-114)

“I think Lilly's the same because she wants to dominate and there's too many different dominant characters within so in a smaller group you get more of a role than lost in a group.” (Parent 1, Parent Focus Group, Page 5, Lines 116-117).

In summary, teachers', parents and children all discussed both emotional and academic needs and the difficulties these caused during the transition between nursery NG and school reception. There is a clear link between being ready to learn and emotional development with children first needing to feel secure within their learning environment to then develop the confidence to engage. These needs must be met before attention, concentration and formal learning can occur. This essentially means that children who attend nursery NGs may access formal learning later than children who do not present with these needs and may appear 'behind there peers' academically.

4.3.4 Theme Four: Communication Between Nurseries, School and Parents

Themes four relates specifically to 'Research Questions 1 & 2' with a primary focus on parent's experiences of transition (Research Question 2). The general

theme of communication between nurseries, schools and parents was a strong thread that ran throughout both the staff and parent focus groups and was a topic that was consistently referred to. Communication was discussed in three main system domains which have been identified as the following sub-themes:

- Parent transition
- Communication with parents
- Communication within the school

Generally, it was felt that the communication between the NG nurseries to the school was good and had systems in place to relate the needs of children, successful strategies and make recommendations on specific transitional support. The communication from NG nursery to parents was also described in a positive light, however parents described limited communication with the school in relation to their child's SEMH needs or progress.

Sub-Theme 1 'Parental Transition'

Both the staff and parents discussed parental anxiety in relation to the children re-integrating into a mainstream reception classroom from their nursery NG, highlighting the importance of a successful parent transition as well as child. Given that parents are the constant entity during transition they are best placed to provide the secure base required for a successful child transition. The parents of the NG children had the same anxieties as 'typical' child parents such as the size of the school, how much support their child would get and their ability to make new friends. These, however were heightened in relation to the NG children's additional needs and the high level of support they had received in nursery Nurture.

"Researcher: What about yourselves? We spoke about the transition and what was put in place for the children but how did you guys feel about the children moving from (NURSEY) to here?"

Parent 1: apprehensive

Parent 2: definitely. It's so nice at (NURSERY) I would have let him stay there forever. He was really happy there in the end.

Parent 3: it's good isn't it?

Parent 1: yes a brilliant nursery.

Researcher: so is that where that apprehension came from then?

Parent 1: Just being such a big school” (Parent Focus Group, Page 19, Lines 475-483).

These anxieties were recognised by the nurseries and they were able to identify this anxiety and put in place some preparatory work with the parents to help them manage this. A specific anxiety that nurseries could help to reduce around what support the children would receive in mainstream reception and what it would look like:

“I think as well it’s managing parents’ expectations for that transition as well because where we’ve been they sometimes take that comfort that it’s ok they’re in that NG. I know that’s being dealt with and then managing that but there is nurture provision but it might look different. It’s not going to be a carbon copy of what you’re used to as a parent and I think sometimes that’s hard for them as well if they’re a particularly anxious parent about things like lunchtimes or if they’re a particularly shy and quiet child. It’s about managing who will do this and who will do that and it’s that transition for them and their child moving to a bigger pond and they’re going to be and making sure.”

(Teacher 2, Staff Focus Group, Page 2, Lines 54-61)

In addition to identifying and supporting anxious parents the nursery also communicated these anxieties to the school and they could then support the parents as they felt appropriate:

“They’ve got that secure base and it’s quite good though because I can flag up to the reception teachers’ that these parents are still really anxious about z y z so it’s kind of having that heads up of you’ll keep an eye out on them for a bit at the new parents evening.” (Teacher 2, Staff Focus Group, Page 7, Lines 207-210).

“Sometimes it’s not at the parent’s request, sometimes it’s at the nursery’s request and we’ll go out and visit them and there was a little boy as well a little while ago who when I spoke to his nursery there were obviously concerns so I

suggested to the parents that we did a home visit and went to see him and spoke to mum there but routinely we don't do home visits but I know the nurseries do.” (Teacher 1, Page 6, Lines 181-185)

One aspect of parental transition that the parents did not feel supported in was the transfer of their child from one NG to another for one of the schools who offered a variant type NG as part of their school provision. As opposed to feeling re-assured that their child would still receive a form of Nurture within their mainstream school, some parents felt judged and this was due to a lack of information as to why the children were receiving this support (the perceived lack of communication between parents and school in relation to their school Nurture provision is discussed in more detail in sub-theme two):

Parent 1: I took offence at the NG.

Parent 1: did you?

Parent 1: why did my children need to go to NG?

Parent 4: for me and Parent 2 we were so pleased weren't we?

Parent 2: I was so happy about it.

Parent 3: I think it's because we weren't told exactly what it was because we were thinking...(interruption)

Parent 1: because SISTER is autistic and our other two children have to go to NG. Aaah. What are we doing so wrong?

What is important to note here is that children who came from the nursery NG were not automatically placed within the school NG and were assessed as in need following transition. Therefore, the lack of communicating need occurred between the school and parent and not the initial nursery NG.

Sub-Theme 2 'Communication with Parents'

This sub-theme specifically reports on parent's experiences of communication with the nursery and schools their children attended meets 'Research Question 2'. Parents generally felt a strong decline in parental involvement following their child's transition from nursery to mainstream Primary school and were not involved in their children's additional NG support (variant) in the mainstream

school setting. This led to three main issues being discussed: a lack of knowledge as to why their children were attending school Nurture provision, a lack of information about the school Nurture provision and a consequent lack of involvement.

Parents reported that they had not received any notification or contact as to why their children were attending school Nurture provision or if they were still attending:

“Parent 4: didn’t they stop doing NG?”

Parent 2: they said he didn’t need it. Then it started again.

Parent 1: that’s what happened to our two. Parent 3 agreed. They weren’t doing it to start with then we got a letter to say they were doing NG.

Parent 3: OK

Researcher: and there was no discussion about why.

Parent 2: no discussion at all.” (Parent Focus Group, Page 6, Lines 114-150).

The parents also felt that without this knowledge they were not actively involved in the assessment process or had given appropriate consent:

“Parent 2: But I’m the same I don’t know what happens here. They just send a letter here saying your child’s going to NG.

Parent 1: I think we should be asked do we want them to go to NG?

Parent 2: yes I agree. (both talking at same time)” (Parent Focus Group, Page 6, Lines 131-134)

The parent focussed group highlighted a lack of knowledge about which staff members ran the school Nurture provision, how often it occurred and the work the children were doing. Parents generally felt separate to the process and had no clear involvement on meeting their child’s SEMH needs.

In relation to relevant Nurture staff the parents had no contact with the Nurture provision teacher directly or through written communication. There was also a

lack of information as to the role the Nurture provision teacher played in the school system:

“Parent 2: but it’s (NG Teacher), who is (NG Teacher) I’ve never even seen her. I don’t know who she is.

Parent 1: oh the lady who walked past and said she would come and see you, it would have been nice if she’d said hello.

Parent 2: it would have been nice to meet her before the NG started and stuff like that so we actually knew who was doing it and she ..

Parent 1: who comes into contact with your child.”

“Parent 2: what is her job? Does she just do NG? Is she a teacher? If she just does NG, what is her qualification? There should be time at the end of the session to send a report. It’s not like she’s the teacher of the whole class. It’s not

Parent 1: that would be nice to know.”(Parent Focus Group, Page 9, Lines 221-225)

As well as not feeling they were receiving communication some parents felt that the information they were providing the school was not being acted upon appropriately or taken seriously enough:

“Parent 2: and I’ve asked twice. I had a meeting with (school staff) and said can someone be with George at lunchtime because that is when he’s having problems and she said yes and nothing happened. So I rang up again and spoke to (school staff) again and said look can you arrange this and she said yes I will and I’ve heard nothing back. That was two weeks ago. The first meeting was ages and ages ago. They listened and they were very understanding.

Parent 4: again I can understand because there are quite a lot of children in school who need more support than George so he’s not going to get it because he’s coping

Parent 2: so then say that. Say we can’t do it. Don’t go yes and then do nothing” (Parent Focus Group, Page 23-24, Lines 564-573.)

In summary, parents felt they had not received the appropriate communication to allow them to become involved in their child's Nurture provision and would have liked to have been more involved:

"Parent 3: I was just saying that once a term they could give you a little review or something to see how they're getting on. How long they think they're going to have to stay there for.

Parent 1: or rather then or as well as a review a plan of this is our intention. These are the targets we're going to try to reach. If you could do a, b and c at home to encourage.

Parent 2: definitely." (Parent Focus Group, Page 21, Lines 538-542).

Sub-Theme Three 'Communication within the School'

The parents discussed how they felt that their children's needs were not being communicated within the school between staff, especially those on lunchtime duties who wouldn't necessarily have access to the same information as classroom teachers'. Knowledge of need and the appropriate consistent response to employ for a child with SEMH needs whilst engaging in an environment they find difficult (the difficulties of lunchtimes was previously discussed) is important to allow these children to feel safe with the adults supervising them.

"Parent 2: but also like the lunchtimes the staff should be aware of like behavioural issues and they definitely aren't.

Researcher: so that initial meeting's happening where the needs are transferred but that information's

Parent 2: ...not being passed on" (Parent Focus Group, Page 13, Lines 331-334)

The parents recognised that the school had ensured that a number of staff members were provided with training that enabled them to be skilled in transition, transition and have skills in relation to specific needs. The parents did not however feel this knowledge had been communicated to all school staff and therefore had become niche to those school staff who attended. This may

become an issue for future transitions with all staff requiring this knowledge to all this to be successful.

“Parent 4: when he was still at nursery (nursery Teacher) arranged for me because you couldn’t get to go on that course with the teachers’ but the two teachers’ that went were not his teachers’. It was about transition from nursery into primary and they were brilliant. The two teachers’ that went they were asking me lots of questions but he didn’t go into that class and I don’t honestly think that the teachers’ ...

Parent 3: It sounds like a waste of time.” (Parent Focus Group, Page 13, Lines 318-323).

The parents felt that the information staff receive from training courses could be better used throughout the school to ensure all staff can support their children and they are not reliant on one or two individual members of staff:

Parent 2: so maybe they’ve ticked their boxes by sending people on the courses but it didn’t benefit Dylan In any way. They weren’t his teachers’ so there needs to be a process that OK if two people go on a course the information still needs to be provided to all the members of staff.

Researcher: so like in house staff training for all the staff teaching.

Parent 1: so if five go on a course then they need to teach the other 30. (said something about support workers)

In summary parents felt there was a clear development need for communication between themselves and the school and between the staff within the school. Mainstream school staff and parents were supported by nursery Nurture teachers to identify and manage parental anxieties in relation to transition through a variety of measures including providing information and visits. Within the school staff focus group communication of need within the school and communication with parents was not commented upon.

4.3.5 Theme Five: School Strategies used to Support Nurture

This theme related specifically to 'Research Question 1' in that it identifies what specific provision schools are putting in place that allows children to settle and re-integrate into a mainstream classroom. This theme is split into two sub-themes; whole school approaches and behaviour management which are both important factors allowing children to feel safe and secure in their environment. Out of all the children interviewed seven out of eight stated that they enjoyed school for various reasons and wanted to attend. This indicates that they enjoy school and have re-integrated successfully with the support of their mainstream school.

Sub-Theme 1 'Whole School Approaches'

Both schools that took part had put in place whole school approaches that supported children with SEMH needs, these included lunchtime adjustments, Nurture provision and specific training to encourage the view of behaviour as an emotional need. One of the schools had a specific Nurture provision that the children could attend (if assessed as appropriate) twice per week for 40 minutes. This provision is available to all children attending the school and not just children who have previously attended NGs. Within this time the children play games, complete group activities and reading whilst practicing their social skills and emotional regulation. This would be classed as a variant NG as it does not meet the required time or structure of a classic NG. The staff from this school were generally positive about the effect of this support on the children they teach:

"Teacher 1: but I know of children who because we talk in June time and I'm aware of all the children who have been to nurture and a lot of them we will continue some form of nurture. It's much more low key than yours but we will do some of it. But with some of them in particular ones last year maybe the one you were just talking about, it makes a huge difference to them and to their behaviour; their social behaviour and their own controlled behaviour or lack of controlled behaviour." (Staff NG, Page 2, Lines 48-53).

It was discussed by the nursery staff that it may be more useful to have this Nurture provision for a more significant amount of time when children first transition. It was hoped that this would reduce the impact of having 40% of the

child's time in a nursery NG to 40 minutes twice a week, using a more staggered approach.

There was a discrepancy here between the parents and staff in that staff identified nursery NG children as immediately accessing Nurture provision whereas the parents felt there was a delay (see 4.3.4).

“Teacher 1: but I know of children who because we talk in June time and I’m aware of all the children who have been to nurture and a lot of them we will continue some form of nurture. It’s much more low key than yours but we will do some of it.” (Staff Focus Group, Page 2, Lines 48-50).

In relation to the school's view on behaviour, nursery NG teachers had presented teacher inset days and demonstrations to embed the view of behaviour as communication in line with NG practice in their mainstream classrooms.

“Teacher 2: we did the same. We did a whole staff inset on it to make sure everyone was aware and then we arranged for people to come and observe so they weren’t actually part of the group but so they could actually see how hard work it is. It’s not just kind of six children and two adults having toast round a table. It is a lot more to it. That really benefitted because they all went away and said ok I’ll try something we were doing and similarly when they were saying we find this bit really difficult we could then focus on it in the NG so them coming to see it I think made a difference as well.” (Staff Focus Group, Page 18, Lines 541-547)

The nursery Nurture teachers were not sure how much this had been embedded into the school system and acknowledged the difficulties of completing this training and specifically the demonstrations due to time constraints, school behaviour policies and practices.

Both schools provided lunchtime adjustments for children who find lunchtimes a particularly challenging time and these are voluntary to attend in most cases.

These clubs consist of a smaller area of indoor/outdoor space, structured activities and a smaller number of children.

“Teacher 3: We found at SCHOOL the playground at lunchtimes was really difficult particularly for the NG children. So I’m now doing lunchtime club. It’s only once a week but they come into me in the nurture room where I was running NG and just play games and just have time with me really and build on some of the things we were doing. It’s so much less than they were having but lunchtimes.... (looking at the others) I don’t know if you find that with the NG children lunchtime is a really difficult time for them.

Teacher 4: we do it (looking at Teacher 1) so they just come into our little garden.

Teacher 1: they don’t have to go out into the big playground if they don’t want to. But they can come into ours and nobody else can come in so they can just be in there on their own.” (Staff Focus Group, Page 10, Lines 332-331)

Both these lunchtime adjustments were discussed favourably and were well attended by the NG children who had discussed their difficulties on the main playground. One school also had peer support in place in which the Year 6 children support the younger children.

Sub-Theme 2 ‘Behaviour Management’

This theme is directly related to ‘Research Question 1’ and discusses the strategies used by schools to manage behaviour deemed inappropriate. The management of NG children’s behaviour in school dominated the discussion making up 12% of the total staff focus group. Parents were not concerned with behaviour management with only one reference to it during the parent focus group. The children did discuss behaviour management in a less formal manner through their discussion of rules within school, with three children referring to these specifically in their interviews. Rules were not a dominant theme in these children’s interviews, however these children were able to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of rules:

“Lilly: and do you know what, people are always playing with it, they don't get the rules cos they always have 6 people in there. And you know what they always do, they always throw the food around

Researcher: do you like the rules?

Lilly: ye

Researcher: why do you like the rules?

Lilly: cos you will stay safe and we don't get throw food at us.” (Lilly Interview, Page 25, Lines 751-771.)

The staff discussed behaviour management in the form of differentiated consequences and reward systems for the reception children generally but with more regard to NG children. All schools have a general behaviour policy as a whole school approach however reception teachers used their autonomy to differentiate in relation to developmental age:

“you can get a red card and that means you miss golden time and things like that but we don't do that in reception. We build on the positive. There have to be some sanctions of some kind but they are instant and once they're cleared then you forget and move on and it's all that kind of thing. We don't operate the same behaviour management systems as they do higher up in the school.” (Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 12, Lines 391-395)

The concept of a consequence (described as sanction in previous quote) equalling an active action would be a new experience for NG children with this type of 'behaviourist' behaviour management system not being used in NGs. Within a NG negative behaviour would be ignored with positive behaviours being celebrated when they occur and school staff appeared to use this approach when they felt it was appropriate. This essentially equals two different responses to negative behaviour in school with some being ignored and some receiving consequences.

“But even in a whole class of 30 children there are some behaviours that you can just ignore and they generally come round when you're not paying them

any attention. You can just ignore them.” (Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 14, Lines 462-463)

“My consequences are their name goes on the grumpy side. It isn’t particularly anything. I’ve had this year ‘don’t put me on the grumpy side’ so that’s how they respond.

If you make me grumpy I’ll put you on the grumpy side and you’ll have to work to get me off. They do that and it’s very minimal but it’s amazing what an effect it has.” (Teacher 1, Staff Focus Group, Page 12, Lines 398-401)

This style of behaviour management is dependent on the relationship between teacher and child and requires the child to want to please the adult and not have them ‘grumpy’ as a result of their behaviour and requires empathy. Therefore, if a child is uncaring of the feelings of their teacher or have not developed sufficient empathy at this point it will prove ineffective.

Staff also differed in their approach to reward with both demonstrating an awareness of the effectiveness of praising positive behaviour. The focus on praising positive behaviour differed only in the approach with schools introducing a response to negative behaviour. For example, a common rewards chart in schools would have a system in which you can move up the ladder with positive behaviour, but also for moving down the ladder for negative behaviour.

“Teacher 3: I think what was in the NG everything has to be very positive whereas I know I’m just saying this about (SCHOOL). They are still very positive with behaviour but their reward system is they will go down or up on a reward chart. So in that sense there is a negative side to it.” (Staff Focus Group, Page 12, Lines 380-383)

Therefore, children can lose the rewards they earned through good behaviour in school which they couldn’t within Nurture.

4.3.6 Theme Six: Strategies Specific to Transition

All participants were asked directly about their experiences of transition which highlighted strategies from all participant groups. This theme related specifically to 'Research Question 1' and with the children's views being central to this research, their views on transition will be presented first and the remaining sub-themes discussed in relation to the children. The process of re-integrating children into mainstream classrooms occurred not at the point of transition but in the summer term of their nursery year. This theme is split into four sub-themes entitled; children's views of transition, preparatory measures and maintaining a consistent attachment figure.

Sub-Theme 1 'Children's Views of Transition'

All children discussed how they felt when joining their mainstream classrooms with all being directly asked in their interviews. Therefore, children's references to transition did not dominate the interviews with one exception whose discussion of transition appeared particularly important to her. This child was dissatisfied with her transition and presented with continuing attachment needs following moving from part-time to full-time education.

"Kiera: scared

Researcher: Bit scared, why were you scared?

Kiera: Because I missed my Mummy. Oh, and I was just going for the afternoon at (NURSERY)." (Kiera Interview, Page 7, Lines 191-196).

The move from part time to full time education highlighted by Kiera is one factor that would not be applicable to all children (some attend full time) but is important for those part-time children in their transition.

The children identified having friends/children they were familiar with as an important factor to helping them feel less 'scared' about the transition. Five out of the eight children discussed having friends to play with who they knew from nursery as a supporting factor when they joined their mainstream classrooms.

"Researcher: ye what was like when you first came here?

Daniel: er scary

Researcher: scary, why was it scary

Daniel: because there were children who were first when in there” (Daniel Interview, Page 17, Lines 510-516)

“Researcher: what made it not scary anymore?

Daniel: erm I knowed everybody’s name” (Daniel Interview, Page 20, Lines 182-185)

Daniel’s account of transition highlights a second important factor to already having friends to needing to know exactly who all the children are by name and this putting him at ease in his environment.

Daniel was one of two children (out of a possible three) whose parents disclosed that he found transition difficult and this was seen in behaviour at home.

“Parent 1: Daniel was the only one. Lilly was fine wasn’t she? Daniel found it difficult. I’m tired. He didn’t want to get up did he?

Parent 4: He did that sometimes.” (Parent Focus Group, Page 17, Lines 414-416).

Children who disclosed sensory needs in their interviews either using ‘snuggly toys’ or issues with clothing found that when these were not met the transition was more difficult.

“Parent 2: everything was just wrong. Nothing felt right but that was obviously because he was stressed about school because that’s what happens. When he gets stressed that’s when he has problems with his clothes and stuff.” (Parent Focus Group, Page 16, Lines 408-410).

Most children interviewed described their transition as a positive one that was supported through their development of relationships (see also 4.3.1) and the meeting of their sensory needs. Although moving from part time to full time education may be an overseen factor that applies to a minority of children.

Sub-Theme Two 'Preparatory Measures'

The term preparatory measures refer to the work undertaken by the school staff and nursery staff to prepare the NG children for what would be expected of them in a mainstream reception classroom. The preparatory measure that were taken included a staggered entry to mainstream school, visits, establishing relationships and specific transition work.

As part of the whole school policy to transition one of the schools discussed (within the staff focus group) how they use a staggered entry policy in which a small number of children attend on the first day, gradually increasing until the whole class is present. This strategy was used in one of the two schools who participated. Conversations between the feeder nursery and school take place to discuss who would benefit from attending on what day and this staggered entry takes place with this in mind. This was met with positive feedback from the parents:

“So he went on the first day which was quite good because what they normally do is put the (NURSERY) ones in last and put the ones who are coming from other places who maybe don't know anyone. They bring them in first so they're in a smaller group and they did put John in there first only with other children he didn't know because they thought he would benefit from that role and getting to know people before it got too hectic and stuff so that was quite good.” (Parent 2, Parent Focus Group, Page 16, Lines 387-392).

It is worth noting however that the children identified knowing other children as a positive factor of transition and that starting on a day on which they do not have these connections may be more difficult.

There were two different types of visits completed as part of the transition process which included children visiting the school they would be attending and school staff completing home visits. The number of visits that children could access was based on their level of need assessed by both the nursery and the receiving school. School visits are available to all children as opposed to a specific strategy used to transition NG children. Within the staff focus group it was identified that

NG children would receive an extra two visits to the school and these would be planned to allow them to experience novel events they would face in mainstream reception:

“And we did things like they would have never experienced before like the lunchtime, the PE, all the things that were going to be super different we had a timetable for that last half term where they had gone over with a key adult from the nursery and stayed and experienced that in the reception class.” (Teacher 2, Page 16, Lines 387-392).

These visits allowed the NG children to take part in novel events in the safety of a secure adult and practice the skills required to manoeuvre through them.

The second type of visit completed by school was home visits in which the reception teacher visited the child's home to develop relationships with the children and parents. Again, this is a whole school policy that is available to all children transitioning if they request it. These are not routinely offered or insisted upon for NG children however staff reported they felt they are successful in the long term when they occur:

“I know when you're saying about home visits for one particular little boy who really struggled to settle at nursery, really struggled with anything different; a trip, a walk, when it was anything different we would have a quite unregulated meltdown and he settled really well in reception and you did do home visits and the mum commented to me because we've now got the younger sibling that he was so excited about his new teachers' coming to his house and we were all worrying about how he was settling in and he got on really well.” (Teacher 2, Staff Focus Group, Page 7, Lines 210-216).

This demonstrates a systemic measure that has allowed the younger sibling of a family, who may have had a similar need to feel supported by the community around him which is protective in nature.

As discussed previously (see 4.3.5), school 1 provided a variant Nurture provision that all children could access if assessed as in need. The teacher who runs this provision is not a classroom teacher and is specifically employed for Nurture and therefore children would not have contact with them unless they attended Nurture provision. As a means of establishing familiarity between the NG children and school Nurture provision teacher, the teacher completed several visits to the NG and was introduced in the summer term prior to school.

“So we are very lucky that the teacher who runs the NG at (SCHOOL) during the summer term comes and spends sessions in the NG at (NURSERY) so she will come and be an extra adult. She’s counted in the ratios and she will just come as a visitor and get to know their names that we trust them that they are a familiar person that they remember things about them that kind of making a difference. I have a photograph of her in the same way we do with all the other adults in the room and she very much comes and does the same thing as an extra person.” (Teacher 2, Staff Focus Group, Page 3-4, Lines 63-69)

Two additional strategies were identified by both NGs as structuring the time for children prior to NG coming to an end and a booklet of photographs in which they could familiarise with their new beginning. Staff within the NGs would use a timetable counting down to the end of term for the children to allow them to visually interpret the ending. The photo booklet was intended for parents to use over the summer holidays to continually prepare the children for their new environment:

“as a separate group so there are about 3 or 4 of them at a time who came with an adult and we just went with them and took photos and then made a photo book of them for them individually so they could see great they’ve got a pirate ship, we’ve got a pirate ship taking photographs so that over the summer it’s a lot more of a kind of smoother path in.” (Teacher 2, Staff Focus Group, Page 3, Line 73-76).

Overall the two NGs had different approaches to preparatory measures and this was in part because one being geographically located within the school and the other not, possibly effecting the level/type of need during transition.

Sub-Theme Three 'Maintaining a Consistent Attachment Figure'

The previous sub-theme identified that NG 2 engaged in a limited number of preparatory measures in relation to transition and this is due to a different approach being taken by this school. NG 2 is located within School 2 and therefore these NG children are familiar with the buildings, staff, location and Primary school environment prior to transition. In order to support these children through transition the NG teacher would spend the first half term of the year in the reception class with the children, to support the reception class teacher with appropriate strategies and maintain a familiar adult whilst settling.

"just whatever they are doing in the classroom so the teacher would do their normal time and support on the carpet and the teacher would sit with them. If they needed a time out. I had to make one of the boys a special box, like a calm down box because he was finding that time really difficult; that carpet time so I went out with him and we would do things like that so really based on individual children's needs we would support in that way." (Teacher 3, Page 5, Lines 139-143)

There was no feedback from reception teachers' or parents from this school on the effectiveness of this as a transition model as these participants refrained to take part. However, it was a model being considered by NG 1 as a form of good practice to maintain an attachment figure through transition:

"and I still feel... I put in a funding request because I feel having done a bit of reading around it that an extra piece that we are missing is continuing over that kind of attachment adult into that term in reception so from our point of view it's managing people. The plan I hoped to be able to put in was to have an attachment adult, somebody from the NG that would go in regularly across the first half term and even the first year just dropping in and checking in on those children saying we are still noticing you. Look how well you are doing. I

can see now you're doing great. Just having that consistent person. Unfortunately due to funding they thought it was a great idea but it wasn't sustainable so it's kind of not gone any further but I still think in terms of our position it is still something I would like to be able to develop and offer."
(Teacher 2, Page 8, Lines 250-259)

NG 1 also discussed how they would like to develop the model further by not only supporting the children in their reception class during transition but to also support the teachers' through modelling good practice:

"...but for her I definitely would have wanted to have done it if I could have done more for her and said you know when this happens it took us four months to understand but this is what she's trying to tell you. Almost like modelled those strategies because I had lots of conversations with them but your fear is they're going to get this label of being a really difficult child whereas in actual fact it was just her defence mechanisms kicking in and I can imagine it's just.. Well they'll find out." (Teacher 3, Staff Focus Group, Page 9-10, Lines 301-306)

This quote suggests a desire for more communication between NG teachers' and reception teachers' during the transition period to develop their understanding of the children they will be working with; a systemic approach as opposed to the current child centred approach of supporting the child within the classroom.

4.3.7 Connectedness Across Themes

Given the interconnected nature of the participants, phenomenon and experience, it is unsurprising that the themes identified include a certain amount of connectedness. It is the researchers view that although all themes are important and stand alone in the data, building secure relationships is central to all other themes. Opportunities for a variety of play allows children to socialise with others and build friendships, allowing them to identify children with shared interests and develop social skills in the natural environment. The strategies used to support Nurture within the school provide a safe environment on a whole school policy level with lunchtime adjustments providing a secure space for children to play and

feel safe. Transition strategies that support children to meet their new teacher in the presence of a safe adult allows them to begin to develop that bond and in turn allows the staff to become aware of their individual needs and personalities. Having familiar friends from nursery was also contributory in allowing children to have a base from which to start exploring the new children.

More subtle connections are also present with communication between parents and the school being linked to the school staff knowledge in relation to the children's needs, with parents bridging the gap during transition points of unknown or changes in need. The emotional regulation of some children through the use of sensory toys is also dependant on the children having the opportunity to engage in independent play in which they can meet these sensory needs.

4.4 Summary of Findings

This research used a qualitative, exploratory methodology to answer specific research questions in relation to the transition of children from nursery NGs into mainstream reception classrooms. It sought the views of key stakeholders including the children, their parents, their NG teachers' and their mainstream reception teachers with the aim to gain an in-depth insight into how this process is managed.

Six themes were identified namely Building Secure Relationships, Opportunities for a Variety of Play, School Staff Awareness of Individual Needs, Communication between Nurseries, School; and Parents, School Strategies used to Support Nurture and Strategies Specific to Transition. Themes were connected due to the interconnection of the participants and the experience and central to this was Building Secure Relationships, with all other themes influencing this.

Given that NG children have generally been assessed as displaying signs of attachment difficulties (Boxall Profile; Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) it is unsurprising that developing safe and secure relationships within the mainstream school environment was such an important factor. Children identified their current teachers' and friends as important to their experience of school and that familiarity with children and teachers was important to them in transition. That

said, teachers did not recognise themselves as important attachment figures during transition and beyond however did recognise a lack of dependence on them as a sign of progress. Children also brought their home relationships into school through drawing and role play opportunities and discussed these relationships as important to them in school.

The children discussed how having familiar children made them feel safer in their new school as this ensured they had somebody to play with and didn't feel excluded. The child-led, play based curriculum within reception classrooms allowed the children to build new relationships with children who had similar interests and allowed them to practice and refine the pro-social skills learnt in NG. Although, independent play in which to self-regulate emotionally was also highlighted as an important factor and were often sensory in nature.

Children did not identify their teacher as a source of emotional support and parents felt this was due to a lack of teacher knowledge of how to support the children emotionally. Staff were also concerned about their ability to meet emotional needs however had put in place wider systemic practices during times they knew the children found difficult (e.g. lunchtime). The staff felt the emotional needs of their Nurture children were a hindrance to their academic progress with a lack of confidence and unwillingness to make mistakes.

The level of effective communication between the nursery and school; nursery and parents; school and parents; and within the school was found to be hugely differing and this made parental transition difficult for some parents. All parties described effective communication practices from the nursery during transition however once the children had transitioned to school, parents reported communication stopped. These parents expressed a wish to be more involved and aware of their children's needs to support accordingly. Staff and parents also felt that more could be done in terms of communication within the school of individuals needs and the support available to them.

Two different systems of supporting Nurture during transition were identified in the two different schools participating highlighting the differences that exist in

general practice. One continued with a variant NG to provide additional support and the other became an additional adult to support the child and staff during the first half term of reception.

The main strategies used to support children during transition were a staggered entry into reception (start with a smaller number of students and it gradually increases), additional visits to school in the previous summer term, home visits and NG teachers' directly supporting in the reception classroom.

All themes are connected to the first theme of building secure relationships and this is true of parental and staff transitional success as well as the child's.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to how they specifically relate to the studies Research Questions and the previously discussed relevant literature (see Chapter 2). These will be discussed in the main in relation to the positive aspects of transition, with barriers to transition discussed separately. The findings will also be discussed within the theoretical frameworks of Attachment Theory, Transactional Models and Development and Social Development Theory.

The researcher will discuss the methodological strengths and limitations of the research and the implications of this for future research and NG studies. The chapter will close with the researcher's reflections on the process of completing the research and the impact of this.

5.2 Discussion of the Main Findings & Research Questions

5.2.1 Research Question 1

What strategies are being used re-integrate reception age children into mainstream classrooms after attending a 'NG' during their nursery year?

This research question aimed to identify what strategies were being used, within two different school settings and two separate NGs. Previous research has reported long-term success of NGs, with NG children successfully re-integrating into mainstream classrooms and remaining there (Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997). However, the mechanisms and processes at work to enable this success was not explored. Therefore, the current research employed qualitative methods to engage NG teachers', mainstream teachers', parents and children into discussions focussed on what made this transition a success. All children taking part in the research had successfully re-integrated and at the time of interview were in the last half term of their reception year.

The constructionism ontology view taken in this research allows us to understand the process of transition from the viewpoint of the people involved in it, with an

understanding of the complexities real world experiences hold (Shwandt, 2000). Given the lack of uniformity, or a model of effective re-integration, it is important to discuss the strategies used from the viewpoints of those who employ them and experience them, hence the inclusion of children, parent, NG staff and mainstream school teachers'.

The strategies used to re-integrate children into their mainstream reception classrooms were present in five out of the six themes, including:

- Building Secure Relationships (supporting factors that promote relationships).
- School Staffs Awareness of Individual Needs (emotional regulation and readiness to learn).
- Opportunities for a Variety of Play (group based play).
- School Strategies used to Support Nurture (whole school approaches and behaviour management).
- Strategies specific to Transition (children's views of transition, maintaining a consistent attachment figure and preparatory measures).

Within the school environment there were processes in place on a systemic, policy led level that provided children with the time and structure to build new, secure relationships with children and staff. For example, the EYFS curriculum in reception year has a strong emphasis on play based learning and developing social and emotional skills, whilst introducing the fundamentals of a more formal learning environment. This provides children with the opportunity to engage with teachers' and children on a more informal level of play, developing shared interests and secure relationships. The children were also provided with structured opportunities to find out more about each other through processes such as 'Show and Tell' and other communal verbal sharing. This is akin to the conversation starters used in NGs during meal times and will be a familiar process to NG children. Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) reported that children found a predictable environment and relationships that promote a sense of belonging as attributes of a NG they value. Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001) similarly reported the quality of relationships with staff, nature of the environment, predictability of routines and opportunities for free play as valuable attributes. Therefore, the similarities between nursery and

reception with a shared EYFS curriculum and structured opportunities to build relationships, supported by teachers' may serve as buffers that allow for a smoother and therefore successful transition.

'School 1' also provided additional NG support in the form of a variant group that the children could attend for 40 minutes up to twice a week. Although this variant NG would have been a considerably different experience for the children, the small group atmosphere, soft furnishings and structured games would be familiar. The staff focus group discussed how beneficial they felt access to this support had been for the nursery NG children in terms of their behaviour and many of the children highlighted they go regularly, with one child identifying it as their favourite place in school. 'School 2' also provided additional nurture support during transition with the children's Nurture Teacher becoming an extra adult in their reception classroom for the first half term. The role here was to maintain a consistent attachment figure in the classroom to allow a feeling of security whilst building relationships with their new teacher. This approach was respected by the other NG staff who would like to incorporate it into their practice in 'School 1'.

Both approaches allow for the gradual reduction of NG support and highlight the varying ways this can occur within the current school resources. One of the benefits of having NG staff present within the school is raising of awareness of the SEMH needs of their pupils. This has been found to impact upon teachers' approach to behaviour management and use of effective strategies to support children (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013) and was evident in the current research. Reception teachers discussed how they differentiated the school behaviour policy to account for the needs of the children, adjusted lunchtimes through clubs, ignore negative behaviours and praise the positive. These changes, particularly to behaviour management are important to the building and maintenance of relationships with NG children and their teachers', with behaviourist approaches often leading to negative behaviours and conflict (NGN, 2014; Making it Count).

The current research did not find that children resented their mainstream classroom and wanted to return to their NG as reported by mainstream teachers' in Cooper &

Tiknaz (2005), despite having access to Nurture support for at least four terms. Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) reported that children become more strongly attached to their NG over time and this hinders transition. Although that was not found here, the gradual reduction of NG support over time may be a factor in enabling the children to successfully separate from this environment and increase successful integration.

In addition to the systemic processes in place within the school, the school and nurseries worked together to prepare the children for their transition into reception. This included providing visits to the mainstream school and taking part in activities they would not have experienced, for example the dining hall and playground, with a trusted adult; as well as school staff visiting the NG (although processes for this were less well established). These visits also allowed the children to get to know their new teacher and establish contact. Some children also received a home visit if it was felt necessary based on the information provided by the nursery. This strategy is a positive step to overcome the difficulties of re-integration identified in the Wirral Re-Integration Report (NGN, 2014; Making it Count) of:

- The extent to which the mainstream teachers had got to know the child attending the NG.

Although this relates to children who have been partially removed from their mainstream class to attend a NG and are then re-integrated into the same class; the child's familiarity and security in the relationship is as important as if they were joining a new class. In comparison to the current study it could be presumed as more important to develop teacher-child relationships as they have not had any previous contact or experience.

Both NG staff and reception teachers reported effective communication of need from the nursery NGs through the sharing of information during a meeting including the parents. This transition meeting allowed the reception teachers to see the journey the child had been on in their nursery year and what support they may need in the reception classroom environment. The extent and quality of communication between NG teachers' and mainstream staff has been reported as lacking in the literature and this has seen consequences for re-integration, with mainstream staff

not having the knowledge of the child to meet their needs (Cooper & Tiknaz, 2005; NGN, Making it Count, 2014). Given that the current research follows the natural transition of all children from nursery to school reception, there may be more opportunity for communication as part of regular transition processes and this timing for re-integration is a positive factor.

The timing of re-integration at general transition also provided the schools with an opportunity to use a staggered entry approach. This enables children who found large, busy classroom environments to start the school year in a smaller group with more children attending each day, therefore gradually increasing the class size. This allowed for children to acclimatise to the school environment in a gradual approach. The parents and staff both felt this worked well for the NG children.

The strategies previously discussed are a result of processes that schools and nurseries have agreed to follow on a systems level, therefore they follow a whole school approach as opposed to intervention/strategies at an individual level. Within the current research, reception teachers were aware and knowledgeable of the SEMH needs of their NG children, but found it difficult to identify specific strategies they use to meet these needs. They acknowledged that this is an area of need they find most difficult to meet due to the busy nature and smaller staff ratios compared to a nursery setting, although all the children identified their teachers' as an important person to them. This implies use of strategies that the teachers' may not see as specific to meet need, but are, however, important to the children. For example, one child commented how his teacher tells him he is a good person; and another discussed how his teacher has a nice voice that makes him happy. Therefore, a specific teaching style for Nurture children that are similar in nature to their NG teachers may be a strategy that is successful for the transition of NG children. Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) reported how the skills and qualities of NG teachers were an important factor in the success of the children and this could be extended to that of the mainstream teaching staff. The interpersonal communication skills of the teachers' in the current study and sensitivity to the children's needs provide more positive interactions and therefore a more successful transition.

5.2.3 Research Question 2

What are parent's experiences of the transition of their children from a nursery 'NG' into a mainstream reception classroom?

This Research Question aims to explore the parental experience of transition and transition of NG children from nursery to mainstream reception. This was important to explore as a measure of effectiveness of current strategies and identification of children's needs. A qualitative approach was taken that focussed on the specific experiences of the parents who took part and encouraged them to reflect on what was successful and what could have been improved. The researcher felt that through group discussion with other parents who may be perceived as less judgemental than the researcher, an insight into experience through a specific cultural and social lens could be gained (Crotty, 1998). Views were also gained from the staff focus group as to how they interpreted the parent's experiences of transition. Together the data formed a theme based on communication:

- Communication between Nurseries, School and Parents (parental involvement, communication within the school, parental transition).

Parents were generally happy with the information they received and the whole school/process used during transition (see 5.2.2) and felt they had sufficient time to prepare their children. However, both staff (staff focus group) and the parents (parent survey) identified a level of anxiety about their child moving to Primary school. Parents reported in their surveys that they were 'quite a bit' confident in the school's ability to meet their children's needs as opposed to having a 'significant/tremendous amount of confidence' suggesting some hesitance, however at the time the survey was taken (one year later) this confidence had increased for most. The preparatory strategies of visits (school and home) and transitional meetings discussed earlier (see 5.2.2) were reported by staff as a positive factor in helping parents cope with this anxiety and parents identified they were happy with this initial preparatory stage.

The survey and parent focus group also indicated that parents felt little to no involvement in the children's current SEMH provision and felt they had no role to play in the transition process due to a lack of communication. Parents reported they

had seen a significant decrease in the amount of communication in relation to the SEMH needs of their child since they had entered their reception year. Therefore, they have not played a part in the transition of their children into mainstream reception. Survey data highlighted most parents see their children's teacher 'once or twice' per year as per the usual parent's evenings. This was clearly a reduced level of communication compared to the nursery setting.

Parents discussed how they had received limited communication from the school in relation to their child's needs other than a letter to inform them their children would be supported by the school variant NG. This had led to some feelings of judgement from parents in relation to their parenting as they hadn't been told why their child was being provided with extra support. This is in line with Shaver & McClatchey's (2013) and Taylor & Gulliford's (2011) findings of initial negativity towards the NG due to a feeling of judgement by parents. Like Shaver & McClatchey's (2014) participants, the negative feeling from parents in the current research had reduced over time and not created a barrier to support as in Cooper & Tiknaz's (2005) study, with a general acceptance of the parents that the school are working to maintain their child's best interests.

One parent did report having additional communication with the school in relation to her child's needs as she felt he was struggling during specific activities. This parent requested extra support for her child and felt this had not been provided after it was agreed in an action planning meeting, this had created negative feelings about the school. Kirkbride (2014) reported that the key to maintaining relationships between the school and home is effective communication and this parent discussed how she felt that her communication with the school had been misleading, resulting in a negative effect on this relationship for the future.

Taylor & Gulliford's (2011) study reported that communication with parents is particularly difficult for variant NG's due to the natural contact a parent has with the school being out of sync with the time children spend in the NG, which was also the case for the current study. For example, in a classic NG the parent would generally either drop or collect their child from the NG which provides a natural point of contact and building of relationships. Within the variant NG's, parents don't

have the same natural contact point with NG teachers' and a specific time and effort would need to be set aside for this. Taylor & Gulliford (2011) also highlighted a difference in the hierarchical difference of a classic compared to variant NG, with a qualified teacher and a TA running a classic and a TA alone often running a variant. The variant NG ran in 'School 1' was also ran by a TA and Taylor & Gulliford (2011) reported that TA's specifically may not have the confidence to have challenging discussions with parents as to why children have been identified as requiring nurture and therefore this may reduce levels of communication.

Parents felt they had a role to play within the SEMH support their children were receiving in school and identified having regular reviews of their child's needs and progress would be beneficial. The parents were also keen to work on the children's needs in the home environment to ensure a consistent approach as they had done during their nursery year. Some of the benefits of parental involvement include providing a safe environment to support parents as well as children (Shaver & McClatchey, 2013), sharing of successful strategies (Taylor & Gulliford, 2011) and maintaining positive relationships that are pro-active and empowering (Kirkbride, 2014).

Overall, the staff and parents felt the children had made good progress in their SEMH and subsequent learning needs during their reception year and therefore transition had been successful, regardless of parental involvement. This finding was also true of Taylor & Gulliford's (2011) NG effectiveness outcomes and leads to similar questions:

- Would children have made more progress/quicker progress during transition with parental involvement?
- Is parental involvement as crucial as previously thought to maintain progress?

5.2.4 Research Question 3

What objects, people and places within the mainstream school are important to children who attended NGs in their nursery year and why?

This research question aimed to gain the children's views as to what aspects of their school environment were important to them and why? This provides insight into what is beneficial for the school environment to include in to aid transition for NG children and help their transition be a smooth one. It is the researcher's belief that children hold great insight into their own needs and have not been effectively consulted within the NG research (Cooper, Arnold & Boyd, 2001; Shaver & McClatchey, 2011). The researcher's constructionism epistemology recognises the individuality of children and their experiences as a separate entity to that which is observed or interpreted by the adults around them.

Only one study (Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014) was found in the systematic literature review (See 2.3.4) that employed a child centred methodology which allowed themes to be generated in relation to what children valued about their NG experience. The current research aims to further these findings in relation to what is important to the children in their mainstream classrooms following a nursery NG intervention. Children's views were included in the following themes:

- Building Secure Relationships (developing social skills to manage conflict, attributes of a good person, supporting factors that promote relationships).
- Opportunities for a variety of play (group based and individual).
- School staff awareness of individual needs (emotional regulation, readiness to learn).
- Strategies specific to transition (children's views of transition).

The children interviewed identified their teachers', friends and families as important to them within their school environment for different reasons. Teachers' were described in a functional manner (upholding rules, giving direction) in the main as well as encouraging them when they felt unsure. Friendships on the other hand were all about play, having fun and being around people who you connect with. Children included their families in their play and how their parents supported their friendships by allowing play dates and walking to school with their new reception friends. Having the security of a teacher keeping you safe, friends you can have fun with and a supportive family are all included within the 'relationships' theme

reported in Griffiths, Stenner & Hick's (2014), identifying that these types of relationships that children build in NG's are just as important to children for their reception environment and re-integration.

Having children that were familiar to them (i.e. had attended the same nursery) was a factor that was important to many of the children in providing a sense of familiarity in the new environment. This was true even if they were not friends with the person. Children expressed that not knowing the names of the children in the class made the initial transition "scary", but that once they had this information it was less so. Therefore, having familiar children is a supporting factor in relation to transition.

Many of the children identified frequent conflict in their relationships with other children but also identified appropriate coping strategies to deal with these situations. This suggests that the emotional regulation behaviours learnt within their NG setting had been transferred to their reception setting. With additional adult support in novel environments, children were also able to apply these social skills and emotional regulation skills. This self-regulatory support was also reported as important to children within the NG in Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) as a valued aspect for children and the children in the current study reported confidence in their abilities to repair their friendships after conflict through effective emotional regulation. Within the current study, children identified having access to sensory (tactile) objects and physical (outdoor) play as important for them to "relax and have a rest". Therefore, having access to these amenities and toys is important for transition.

The quality and type of interactions children experienced with reception staff were an important factor and varied with some developing relationships with staff through shared interests (e.g. Art), some through positive affirmations (e.g. kindness) and some through the assertion of rules to keep them safe (e.g. counting the children to make sure all were present after a fire alarm). The type of interaction was less important than the quality of it in relation to how it made the children feel, which furthers the initial findings of Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001). The children all had one key attachment figure they could identify and explain in a functional manner what that adult provided for them (e.g. feeling of safety or self-worth).

The opportunity to play in a variety of different ways (role play, construction, art, puzzles, sensory) was an important factor for children with all important objects pictured being of this nature and none of a formal academic nature. This highlights the play based stage of learning the children are currently accessing and the value they place on this time. The fact that the EYFS curriculum allows for this was a supporting factor for the transition of children as it is still appropriate for their development age. Syrnyk (2014) reported that older children (Primary age) within a specialist provision based on NG principles liked the differentiated teaching approach of opportunities to play and more active/participatory methods of learning. Therefore, allowing children to engage in a curriculum style that is matched to their development may be an important factor for successful transition.

Overall children identified having positive relationships, time to play and time to de-sensitise as important factors within their reception classrooms.

5.3 Barriers to Transition

Readiness to learn was a barrier to transition within the current research with staff, parents and children all identifying difficulties in this area. Staff felt that children's emotional needs effected their confidence to engage in a task without fearing making a mistake; parents discussed how their children found it difficult to concentrate in the classroom; and the children felt they did not have formal learning skills such as writing compared to other children. Some staff felt these difficulties had continued until the end of reception and that the children required additional support in this area.

Cooper & Tiknaz (2005) reported that although children's improvements in SEMH were recognised by teachers', there were little or no gains made in relation to their academic progress. This was attributed to a lack of communication between mainstream teachers' and NG staff however the children's views highlighted difficulty of tasks, longer waiting times within/between activity times and a lack of instruction as aspects of the mainstream classroom NG children find difficult. Within the current study children described formal learning as "hard", "getting it wrong" and "boring" which is in line with the children's views from the Cooper & Tiknaz

(2005) study. Furthermore, although the staff focus group discussed readiness to learn as a difficulty for NG children, no specific strategies were identified as a means of meeting these. Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014) identified that children enjoyed and benefitted from the scaffolding, rewards and recognition during their learning and may be a useful set of strategies for increasing academic progress and supporting transition.

A comment made within the staff focus group that children who have attended and completed a NG have already had their needs met, may explain the lack of specific strategies to support transition within the classroom; as opposed to whole school approaches. It is the researcher's belief that this is a common opinion of not only NG intervention but of intervention in general and is borne from studies of effectiveness. The studies of effectiveness reviewed within the systematic literature review (see 2.32) highlight the significant progress children have made in their SEMH needs using quantitative measures such as the Boxall Profile (Bennathan & Boxall, 1998) and the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) and do suggest their needs have been met. What these studies do not identify are long term effects which may suggest to some that changes are permanent, alike to academic process that has been measured. Measures of SEMH are not akin to static cognitive development however only one of the reviewed studies included follow up data. O'Connor & Collwell (2002) reported relapses in four of the 16 strands of the Boxall Profile that had sustained improvements in, which equates to a 25% decrease approximately two and a half years post intervention. What effect these specific relapses have on learning and SEMH functioning within the classroom environment remain unexplored and therefore the relevance of this is unknown. This is important for schools to have an awareness of to support effective transition and allow NG children to reach their academic potential.

Although most of the children who attended the NG's in the current study transitioned to the local feeder school, this was not true for all and was a concern for the NG teachers'. These children would not benefit from the additional Nurture support available in both schools (although the receiving school may have its own NG support), would not have the same whole school approach to transition (visits

to the school, home visits, transition meetings) and it is likely they would not be family with their new classmates (important for the children in the current study).

Although children appeared to have settled well into the reception classroom environment there was concern raised by parents that the transition to Year 1 may be more difficult. This is due to the change in curriculum from the play based EYFS to a more formal learning approach, however still age appropriate and differentiated to need as per best practice. Therefore, NG children's difficulties within the learning environment may become more apparent. Parents were also concerned with communication within the school during the transition from reception to Year 1 due to a lack of staff training and transfer of information in relation to each child's needs. The parents felt it made their responsibility to inform the new Year 1 teacher of additional needs when issues started to occur.

5.4 Discussion in Relation to Theory

This section describes the findings in relation to relevant theory within the research literature and includes Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), a Transactional Model of Development and Social Development Theory (Vgotski, 1987).

5.4.1 Attachment Theory

NG's are rooted in attachment theory and identify the relationship between the primary caregiver and the child as the most important factor in social and emotional development (see Chapter 1). The role of Nurture Group provision is to 'replace missing or distorted early nurturing experience' (NGN 2016, pg. 2) through experiencing attuned, nurturing care and intensive interactions within a predictable and safe environment (Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks, 2014). The children within the current study had previously attended a NG in their nursery year and had therefore had the opportunity to experience/replace missing nurture and therefore had created a secure attachment with their NG teacher. It is the researcher's view that this attachment was person/environment specific which has implications for transition, especially in this case when a child is attending a new school. Therefore, the nurture group children required additional support to develop new secure attachments within their new Primary school that was additional to what a typical child required. This was recognised by both the NG nurseries and receiving schools

with additional transition measures put in place such as extra visits to the school, home visits and practicing routines.

The children's development of secure attachments to their teachers' and fellow pupils allowed the facilitation of learning and successful transition (Cooke, Yeomans & Parks, 2008). This was secured using main strategies of providing an emotionally supportive environment and ensuring appropriate social interactions. Children discussed their teachers' in a functional manner that included providing structured activities, upholding the rules, making sure people felt safe and making the feel positive about themselves (emotionally supportive environment). Children also discussed the importance of having the opportunity to play with their peers which provided an opportunity for them to practice their social skills in structured and un-structured environments that allowed children to learn skills modelled by their peers (appropriate social interactions).

Ainsworth's (1991) definition of attachment indicates that a child will feel confident to move away from the safe base (attachment figure) and explore their new environment when this attachment is secure. Ainsworth (1991) felt this attachment figure did not have to be a parent relationship. Within the current study children did not have enough time with their new teachers to build a secure attachment prior to their transition and transition however all managed this without significant difficulties. One of the schools used a transition figure in the form of the NG teacher with whom the child had an attachment, facilitating the development of new secure attachments with the child's receptions teacher. This appeared effective from school feedback and was a model being considered by the other school.

The use of a 'consistent attachment figure' to aid transition is an interesting factor and for the children in the current study this included their families and their friends from their nursery school, who were 'constants' in an ever-changing environment. Children discussed how having familiar children around them during their transition made this less 'scary' and was a supporting factor which may have provided a temporary safe base from which they could develop new secure relationships. Facilitating relationships with teachers' and the making of new friends.

Bowlby (1969) reported the relationship between ourselves and our primary caregiver results in the development of either a secure or defective 'Internal Working Model'. Our 'Internal Working Model' is a reciprocal cycle that re-enforces interpretations and appropriate/inappropriate behaviour through consistency of response in our social activities (Bowlby 1973; Wallin, 2007). Within a NG a specific type of positive behaviour management is employed in which negative behaviours are ignored (providing they are safe) and children are overtly praised for effort and positive behaviours. NG teachers' model pro-social behaviours and are specific about what the child has done that is positive (providing language to the non-verbal) to develop children's 'Internal Working Models'. This style of behaviour management contrasts with a traditional behaviourist school behaviour management policy based on rewards and consequences and this would be a significant change for a NG child. The schools in the current study had incorporated this into their daily practice and had differentiated their behaviour policy to that of positive style and used the traditional behaviourist model for times they felt safety was compromised. The type of internal working model a child develops effects readiness to learn, ability to maintain positive relationships, co-operation and emotional self-regulation (Scroufe, 1988; Scroufe, Fox & Pancake, 1983; Van Ljzendoorn, 1995) and is therefore an important step for schools in the positive management of children's behaviour.

5.4.2 Social Development Theory

Social Development Theory (Vygotski, 1978) is a learning theory that emphasises the importance of social interaction and facilitation in a child's development, with social interaction being the foundation of learning (as opposed to cognition). Learning is completed with the 'zone of proximal development' (the difference between performance under guidance/collaboration and the ability to problem solve independently) in which learning is scaffolded through modelling and facilitating a skill to increase a child's understanding and ultimate ability. The EYFS curriculum in the current research provided an opportunity for this type of learning to occur as opposed to more tradition 'chalk and talk method' in which knowledge is imparted from adult to child. This was particularly important for the children in the current study who lacked confidence in their learning and found making mistakes/getting it wrong emotionally overwhelming. This emotional need of the

children being ready to learn was also acknowledged by the teachers' as a barrier to learning. The researcher feels this approach could be furthered within the school system to develop confidence and independence in learning.

5.4.3 Transactional Model

The transactional model of development uses an eco-systemic approach (Christenson, 2004) with the aim of improving social interactions through mutual change. The model states that a change in one's behaviour will cause a change in the others in a reciprocal, circulatory effect. Within the child-parent model reported by Taylor & Gulliford (2011) the child increases their positive communication with their parent as a result of NG intervention and this in turn makes the parent feel less rejected. The positive behaviour is met by a positive parental response which re-enforces this behaviour and develops a more secure 'Internal Working Model' (see 5.4.2).

Within the current research there had been a breakdown in communication between the parents and the teaching staff (including the NG teacher) in terms of effectively communicating the SEMH needs of their children and what specific intervention was being put in place. The lack of communication in this case had led to a negative view of the support the children were receiving and a feeling that parents were not important enough to involve in the intervention. This is important to note as parents expressed a feeling of judgement of their parenting because of their children being allocated NG intervention and the lack of subsequent communication may re-enforce this.

Adopting more effective communication approach such as the strengths based model of parental involvement outlined by Kirkbride (2014) would improve parental and allow for a new positive transaction to become the norm.

5.5 Critique of the study

This research used an experiential qualitative design to explore the experiences of children, school staff, NG staff and parents of transition of NG children into a mainstream reception classroom. It would have been useful to gain quantitative

information as an evaluative tool of the individual child's transition through comparison of their final NG Boxall Profile. Changes in this would indicate if a child had maintained the gains made through NG provision or relapsed as seen in previous research (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). As interviews took place in the final two weeks of the child's reception year this would have provided sufficient lapse in time following transition to measure change, however, due to the small sample size, data would have been comparable on an individual level only.

The purposeful sampling method used resulted in a small participant pool due to the relative rarity of nursery NG's and puts limits on the level of generalisability for transition practices overall. The sampling also prevented children who left the nursery NG and did not attend the main feeder school taking part in the research, which was true for some NG members. This participant group would have been a useful comparison group due to the difference in preparatory measures and general transition practice they received and the differences in school environment and provision.

The child-centred methodology employed in this research is a strength of the study. However, due to time pressures of the school year, the researcher completed five interviews on one day and three on another, back to back. This may have affected the quality or interpersonal skills of the researcher with these being socially and mentally draining (Hallowell et al, 2005), however the strength of the child-centred methodology reducing the demands on the researcher protects against this. This also prevented the level of reflection in-between interviews to improve performance (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The use of the children's pictures within the data analysis, specifically the order they chose to speak about them may have given greater insights. The children were asked to speak about their pictures in order of importance and this would have allowed us to see what was most important to them in relation to people, places or objects. Although the child centred methodology removed some of the verbal constraints associated with interviewing young children, the data analysis was based on what they had said and therefore suffered from lessened but similar constraints in relation to output.

Although the focus groups were good in terms of size (N=4) according to Braun & Clarke's (2014) three to eight participants guide, the composition was not representative of the whole sample. School 2 decided it did not want to take part in the staff focus group and did not grant access to parents for them to be invited to the parent focus group. Therefore, School 2 staff and parents are not reflected in the analysis of data for the parent or staff focus groups and reflect School 1's view only.

Within the focus groups themselves, observation data was collected by a colleague to provide information on the interaction of participants. This was not used in the thematic analysis and may have added an interactional element. General observations however did reveal that one staff member made minimal contributions to the focus group and one parent within the parent focus group was 'talked over' often, therefore not able to make himself heard.

Within the parent focus group specifically, there was an undertone of loyalty to the school and expression of guilt that they felt they hadn't been kind about their experience of the transition of their children. The parents were clear they wanted to express their kind wishes and thanks to the school and teachers for the general hard work they do to meet the needs of their children.

The timing of the focus groups was also a limitation as they took place when the children had transitioned to Year 1. This meant that there had been a substantial amount of time since the parents experienced the transition and this may have affected their recollection, having had time to reflect. The parents would have recently supported their children through the transition to Year 1 which may have also impacted on their contributions to the focus group.

Overall, this research has a strong child centred methodology that collects data through differing methods and from separate three sources, about the same transition experience. As with all research improvements can be made and particularly within sampling strategy. It would also be useful to add a quantitative post intervention evaluative aspect to the research as well as a comparison group

of children who do not follow the typical feeder school route.

5.6 Implications for Future Research & Transition

Following the relation of findings to the previous research literature and theory some points for further research have been identified in order to further our knowledge and skills in the area of transition:

- The effect of entering an EYFS structured curriculum compared to a more formal learning environment on transition of NG children.
- The transition of nursery NG children from reception to Y1. How do they cope with a more formal learning environment and how does this effect their SEMH?
- What is the effect of Boxall Profile relapses following transition on learning and SEMH functioning?
- Exploring the effects of using a variant NG as a means of transition following completion of a 'classic NG'.
- Exploring the effects of using a consistent transition attachment figure for the first half term of reception as children transition from nursery NG to reception class.
- Longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of NG's.

With these in mind it may be useful for EP's, schools and NG leaders to consider the following prior to transition:

5.7 Implications for EP Practice

Within my practice, it is rare for a child to be referred to the service for needs in relation to SEMH before entering Year 1, however is increasingly common higher up the primary school years, often with a focus on difficulties in behaviour management. This identifies two areas of focus for EP practice in line with the research findings; firstly, early intervention as a form of prevention through supporting schools to invest in SEMH provision such as NGs and secondly, supporting schools in the development of their behaviour policies in line with need.

EP work with a focus of identifying children with SEMH needs and providing the appropriate support during their nursery year, may serve as a preventative

measure for future outcomes. The research findings demonstrated that all the children had transitioned and remained in school for at least one year and continue to be on role, requiring in most cases minimal adult support. Due to good school links with the local NG provider, school staff provided support learnt from NG practice that allowed the children to feel safe and this was evident in their reporting of their relationships and attachments within the school environment. SEMH support for pre-school children although recognised as a need, can be viewed as developmentally appropriate for pre-school children and therefore not addressed. It is my view that although emotional development continues through the Primary and Secondary school ages, this is more easily targeted through known intervention and practitioners find sourcing and running early years interventions more difficult. This is likely affected by budgetary restrictions. Therefore, EP's could prove beneficial in supporting early years settings to source and use SEMH intervention and whole school approaches to prevent future difficulties.

The research findings highlighted the role school reception teachers played in differentiating the school behaviour policy to account for the needs of their children. They also highlighted additional whole school approaches put in place to prevent difficult behaviour such as lunchtime gardening clubs for example. This practice was not apparent across all participating schools and highlighted a possible role for EP's in the development of appropriate behaviour policies and whole school approaches to managing the behaviour of children with SEMH needs.

Within the researcher's experience, EP's are not often involved in work focussed on the transition of nursery aged children to primary school, unless there are complex/significant cognitive difficulties. The findings from this study demonstrate that the development of transition programmes and differentiating the curriculum may be useful. Although school staff completed home visits and settle visits with all the children, the findings suggest that friends were important as well as developing a relationship with one key adult. Having knowledge of the other children in the class was also important, for example knowing all their classmate's names. The children in the study due to their age could access a play based curriculum that children in NGs in higher year group would not have access to, allowing them to practice their social skills in a practical yet play based manner,

which was important to them. This may be important for transitioning older children in ensuring they have access to this safe practice of skills learnt through nurture.

The themes highlighted within the findings were all linked to attachment theory and the development of secure relationships (Theme 1). For NG children specifically, EP knowledge on attachment and the links between emotional literacy and attainment, may be crucial in developing the appropriate support for children re-integrating into mainstream classrooms. This also applies to parental involvement with children when they leave nursery and enter the school environment, with the development of a clearer role and responsibility of parents throughout this transition. These systems were lacking in my findings and EP's could support the development of this collaborative working.

Within the context of the local LA and because of findings in relation to effective communication, the researcher has organised a 'Nurture Group Support Network' for staff directly involved in the running of NG's. The aim of this network is to provide peer support through the use of models such as 'Solution Circles', share physical resources and improve the sharing of effective practice from a variety of settings. Prior to this network being established, NG teachers were not linked to each other and had no lines of communication. The findings within the research highlighted the need for improved staff communication in relation to needs and appropriate strategies to meet need. The role of the EP here is to first empower the school NG leads to communicate their knowledge to the wider school staff and the establishment of the 'Nurture Group Support Network' is felt to be a good starting point to this. Staff training across whole school staff as opposed to key members (e.g. SENCo) would also improve general knowledge.

5.8 Reflexivity

5.8.1 What impact did I have on the Research?

This research took a constructionism ontological viewpoint which recognises that

individuals interpret situations and create their own meanings through their own social and cultural understanding (Shwandt, 2000). This interpretation is then re-interpreted by the researcher (double hermeneutics) based upon the participants ability to communicate their meaning and the interpretation of this meaning based within the researcher's own cultural and social background (Clegg & Slife, 2009). The researcher therefore acknowledges that there will be bias in the results due to their own social and cultural experiences.

The researcher has a specific interest in attachment theory and children with SEMH needs previously being employed within the Youth Justice System. The researcher believes that children who are given the appropriate opportunities to develop trusting and loving relationships can develop to experience positive life experiences, as opposed to substance abuse, entering the youth justice system and adult mental conditions (Busch, Zagar, Hughes, Arbit & Bussell, 1990). Therefore, I feel passionate about meeting the needs of children with SEMH needs as I have seen first-hand the consequences of not meeting these. This may have influenced my theoretical interpretation and data analysis and this subjectivity is a drawback of using a qualitative methodology.

The researcher has also never been a teacher and therefore does not have the working understanding of the demands and stresses of the job. The purpose of including a short survey prior to participating in the focus group was twofold: firstly, to allow participants to reflect on their current knowledge and focus on the research topic; and secondly to provide the researcher with a context for the knowledge and practices around transition and parental involvement within the school environment. Therefore, my hope of finding individual strategies and reporting on what schools are doing may not fully take into consideration the practicalities of embedding different strategies.

The general skills and experience of the researcher may have been a factor in that this is the first time using a qualitative methodology and conducting focus groups with groups of adults. Is it expected that as one becomes more experienced in an area they become more skilled and this may have influenced results across the project.

Being a Trainee Educational Psychologist within the Local Authority, it is possible that school staff felt judged or that I presented from a position of evaluation. This may have been raised by the inclusion of the staff survey. During the staff focus group there was a level of defensiveness when I was asking about what schools were specifically doing to re-integrate children. This may have influenced the openness of the staff within the focus group.

5.8.2 What impact did the research have on me?

The researcher's passion for the area has increased with the completion of this work and has led to specific pieces of systemic work to improve the communication and support networks for school staff supporting children with SEMH needs.

The research itself has provided me with the experience of working within a qualitative paradigm and doing so because it is the most appropriate and not the most convenient. Naturally I am comfortable with numbers, structure and clear boundaries; therefore, the openness of this qualitative design was a challenge to my thinking overall and my skill level. It has forced me to identify bias in my practice as opposed to looking from a positivist lens in which I have no effect, considering the social, political and cultural lens that people interpret their meaning from. This is also true of how people interpret my meaning and this will have effects on me as a practitioner in the long term.

The researcher has recognised a bias for recognising mothers as the primary caregivers when this was not the case for some children in this research and this has had a wider impact on my practice.

5.9 Conclusion

This research aimed to obtain the views of children, parents, NG staff and school teachers on the process of transition of nursery NG children into their reception year. The study used an explorative qualitative design, using photo elicitation

(children), semi-structured interviews (children) and focus groups (staff and parents) to collect data that was analysed using thematic analysis. The methodology used in this research allowed the gathering of children's views and provided insight into the knowledge children have regarding their needs and what is useful in supporting them within school. The inclusion of parents, NG staff and school staff allowed for discussion of transition that was specific to a child and school in which all participants were invested in.

This research findings highlighted some good whole school practice and communication between a small number of NG's and schools to provide our NG children with a smooth transition to Primary school and transition into full-time mainstream education. NG teachers and school staff established good links and transition practices with extra visits, staggered transition and establishing a relationship with a key adult (home visits). This was beneficial to transition and the teachers reported good knowledge of children's needs and successful strategies. Participating schools also provided systemic support following transition through access to a nurture style environment and using a NG teacher to act as consistent attachment figure during the first half term of reception. Both these approaches were viewed in a positive light and highlights the varied ways in which transition support can be provided for Nurture Group children. One limitation in this process was identified as a lack of communication to the wider school staff and these practices appeared limited to NG staff and reception teachers. This could impact on situations in which the specific teacher is not present, such as dining rooms and play time, both of which can be difficult environments for children with SEMH needs.

The themes identified highlighted relationships, opportunity to play, sufficient preparation and an awareness of and ability to meet need as important factors for successful transition. The building of secure attachments was central to all other themes with this forming the initial building block for all other processes to occur. To learn children reported they needed to feel safe, with a teacher who was clear and consistent with the rules and also needed to feel wanted within the school environment. This stretched to their friends and the wider school community with kindness being particularly important, even when they acknowledged negative

behaviour. The NG children had managed their first year of reception well and demonstrated some skills development that they would have practiced in NG such as managing conflict and working in teams, which they had been largely successful in. With these central skills and the opportunity to practice these through play, children felt safe and secure in their environment.

Within the context of rising SEMH needs within our schools and new government green papers (Department of Health & Department of Education, 2017) aiming to reduce this, the NG nurseries emphasis on developing children's social and emotional functioning before they enter formal education, may serve as a preventative measure to future targeted intervention. Within the context of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1965), it is not surprising to the researcher that relationships were of utmost importance for all participants in promoting successful transition. Links were also made to the transactional model of development (Christenson, 2004) and social development theory (Vgotski, 1978) with positive interaction at their core.

Following transition, whole school approaches to children with SEMH needs were more prevalent and represented a shift in approach from the NG, which provided individual and directive input. Behaviour policies, unstructured time periods and learning styles were all accounted for with SEMH needs in mind within the school environment, although this was accessed through more subtle approaches. For example, increasing a child's confidence to speak in class through scaffolding, modelling and structured tasks such as 'show and tell', with all children participating. This approach allowed the children to become less reliant on their teachers and this was reflected in their interviews with many identifying independent regulation strategies (physical activity, cuddly toys), as opposed to attempting to gain their teachers attention through behaviour.

The findings highlighted that parents play less of a role in their child's SEMH provision as they transition to Primary school and that they would like to play a more supportive and active role in this. Given the role parents play as a constant transient figure during transitions though school and the knowledge they hold in relation to their children's specific needs, it would be logical to determine that use

of parents as a resource would aid transition and future developments. The limited communication to parents may have also impacted on their view of the knowledge of their children and their ability to meet their needs. Participating parents highlighted that they felt teachers did not recognise their children's emotional needs and without opportunity to discuss these needs with the staff initially or regularly, these views were upheld. Parents did not have a clear awareness of the intervention and support their children were receiving in school and this lack of knowledge increased the feeling of a lack of understanding and support for their children. There is a clear role for the EP in ensuring parental involvement is meaningful for all and provides a greater understanding of all children.

The findings within this study form the beginnings of exploration into successful and unsuccessful transition practices of NG children which has been neglected in the research literature, with a lack of long term data being currently available. The possible role for EP's in transition of NG children were identified on both individual child level and a systemic school level, ranging from differentiation of curriculum to supporting the development of behaviour policies and SEMH programme and creating a supportive role for parental involvement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1- Summary of Studies Within Systematic Literature Review

Appendix 2- Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 3- Staff Survey

Appendix 4- Parent Survey

Appendix 5- Staff Focus Group Guide

Appendix 6- Parent Focus Group Guide

Appendix 7- Observation Guide

Appendix 8- University of East London Ethics Approval

Appendix 9- School Information & Consent Form

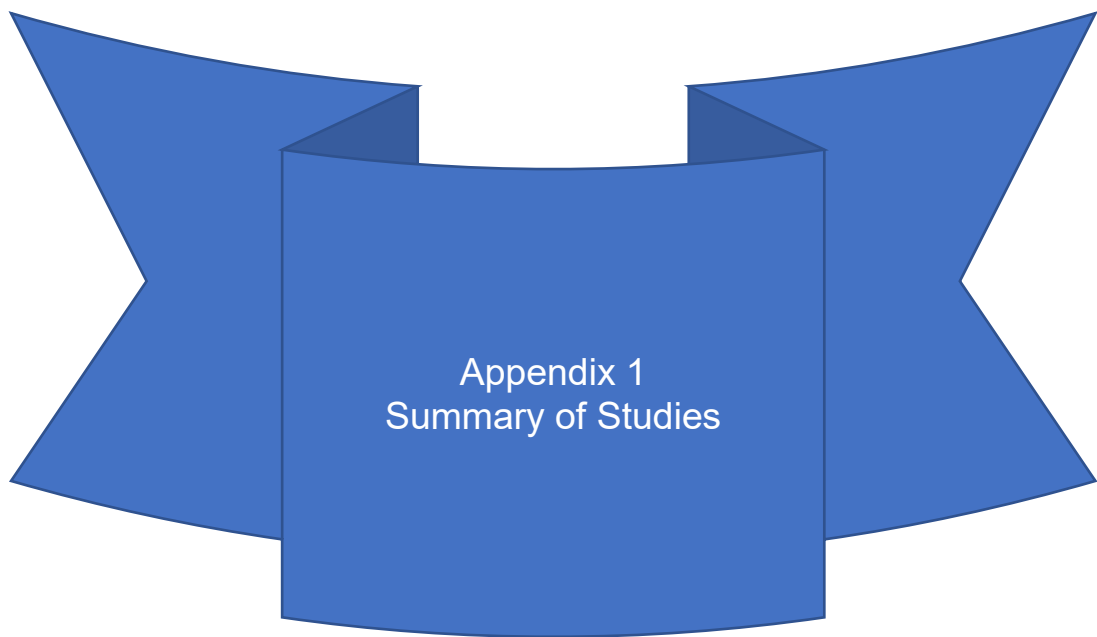
Appendix 10- Consent form for Child Participation

Appendix 11- Pictorial Child Information Form

Appendix 12- Participant Debrief

Appendix 13- Parent Information & Consent Form for Focus Group

Appendix 14- Teacher Information & Consent Form for Focus Group



Author & Date	Methodology (Quality Rating)	Type of NG (Classic/Adapted)	Design	Sample	Variables & Measures	Analysis	Findings
Hughes & Schlösse r. (2014). <i>Individual pieces of research discussed outlined below</i>	Quantitative	4 x Classic 6 x Adapted	Systematic Literature Review of 13 research papers	4-18 years. 11 x Primary Age 1 x Secondary Age 1 x not stated	11 x Questionnaires (BP & SDQ) 1 x Case Study 1 x Observational	1. Effectiveness of NG's 2. Style of communication used in NG's 3. Downs & Black Checklist (1998)	NG's are effective in improving the emotional well-being of children.
Seth-Smith et al (2010)	Quantitative (68.4%)	Classic	Pre- and post-intervention (6 months between). Matched control group (gender & ethnicity)	NG=41 Control=36 4-8 years (mean 5.9) 10 NG schools 5 control schools Mainstream infant and primary school.	BP SDQ (t) Formal assessment of academic attainment.	Multi-level mixed-effects linear regression for each outcome measure.	Significant differences in NG and Control children. *SDQ (t) hyperactivity, peer problems, pro-social behaviour #conduct difficulties and emotional difficulties. BP *both groups 'organisation of experience' (more consistent for NG) and 'internalisation of

							control' (less for NG) # 'undeveloped behaviour' & 'unsupported development'. *Academic attainment for both groups Control group demonstrated increasing levels of emotional difficulties and conduct problems.
Cooper, Arnold & Boyd (2001)	Quantitative (68.4%)	Classic	Pre- and term 3 (SDQ-t) Pre- and end of term 2 (BP) 2 control groups (age, gender, educational attainment, level of SEBD)	NG=216 CG (SEBD)=64 CG=62 4-10 years Mainstream school	BP SDQ (t) Teacher and educational progress (TREP) Parent Questionnaire (PQ) Pupil perceptions	Repeated measures analysis of variance for BP Chi-square analysis for SDQ	*SDQ(t) NG compared to CG (SEBD) and non SEBD CG. * BP scores 96% staff: NG have positive effect on whole school. TREP: improvements in academic progress of NG. PQ: positive impact of NG on children.
O'Connor & Colwell (2002)	Quantitative (58.8%)	Classic	Pre, post and follow up for 12 children (mean time=2.67 years).	N=68 (mean age=5.35 years)	BP	t-tests	*T1 & T2 BP: greatest improvement in 'participates constructively' and accommodates to

							<p>others'; most significant change in 'disengaged' and 'avoids attachment. #T3 in 16/20 sub-strands. Evidence of relapse in undeveloped/insecure sense of self', 'shows negativity towards other' and 'wants/grabs disregarding others'.</p>
Doyle (2005)	Quantitative (54.5%)	Classic	Case study Pre- and post-measure (3 months between)	N=1 5 years old	BP	No statistical analysis	BP improvements although scores remain outside normal range.
Shaver & McClatchey (2013)	Mixed Methods	Classic	Pre- and post-measures Focus Groups (NG children) Semi-structured interview (NG Staff)	N=19 (FG) N=33 (pre- and post-measures) N=5 (NG staff)	BP Post focus group questionnaire.	t-tests of BP No analysis described for qualitative data (descriptive account) Survey data on questionnaire.	<p>*BP on all strands</p> <p><u>NG Child FG & Questionnaire</u></p> <p>Overall NG children felt happy in NG and enjoyed it. NG children had made friends within NG. NG children understood the aims of the NG. NG Staff</p>

							<p>Whole school benefits of NG. Improved academic progress. Increased confidence and increased ability to form attachments. Parents are negative initially due to feeling of being judged but become positive over time. Parents feel supported by NG staff. Challenges- funding, training, space, group dynamics.</p>
Cooper & Tiknaz (2005)	Qualitative	Classic	<p>Semi-structured interviews with NG staff (teachers and teaching assistants), mainstream school staff and headteachers.</p>	<p>NG staff: N=3 (NG teachers). Unknown amount of TA's. Mainstream teachers N=9. Headteachers N=3.</p>	<p>RQ's What are the effects of NG's on children's social, emotional and educational development.</p>	<p>No data analysis specified.</p>	<p>Factors contributing to success (NG staff): composition of group, quality of interactions (between NG staff and NG staff to children), positive peer relations, staff skills and qualities,</p>

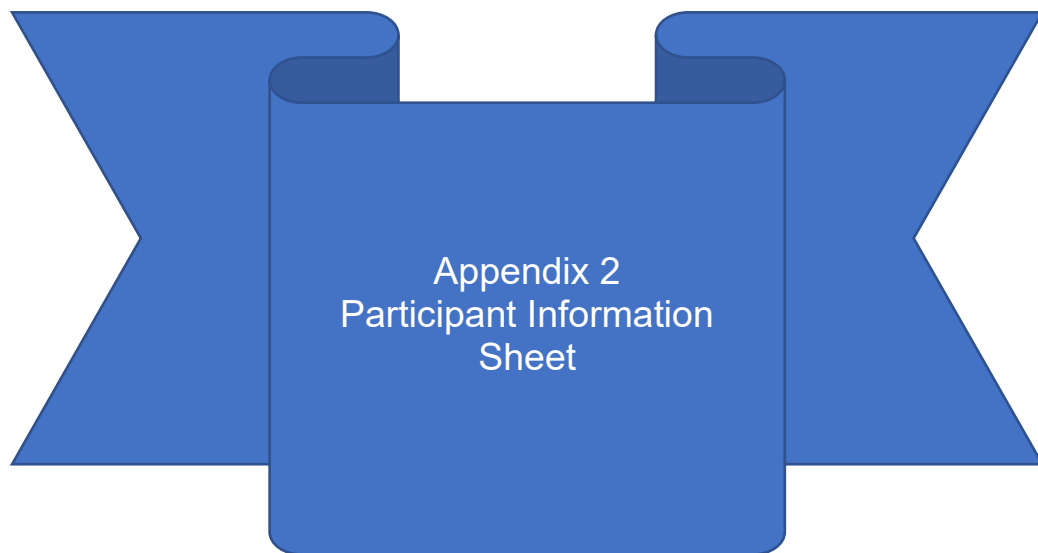
			40 hours of non-participant unstructured observations				<p>headteacher support.</p> <p>NG staff challenges: home attitude towards school and a lack of competent children to support teaching and modelling of skills.</p> <p>Mainstream teachers concerned about academic attainment, view of NG's for lower ability pupils, lack of communication between NG and mainstream, NG children difficult to include.</p> <p>Mainstream teachers benefit of NG: reduced acting out, respite, initiation of conversation with peers, participation, self-esteem, confidence, anger management.</p> <p>Headteachers found NG's as complementary to the whole</p>
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							school ethos and value system which adds to effectiveness.
Taylor & Gulliford (2011)	Qualitative	Variant	Semi-structured interviews (N=26)	Parents: N=15 Teacher/Teaching Assistant: N=11	None	Grounded Theory	<p>The following themes were identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents Experiences of Nurture Groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -improved child behaviour improved child-parent relationship. -lack of communication with NG staff. 2. Nurture Group staff's experience of working with parents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -informal meetings more successful. -lack of contact between NG staff and parents.
Kirkbride (2014)	Qualitative	Not explicitly stated.	Semi-structured interviews (N=8)	NG Staff: N=4 Parents: N=4	RQ's What are the themes that emerge with parents about parental	Thematic Analysis	<p>The following themes were identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forms of parental involvement. 2. Barriers to parental involvement.

					involvement in NG's? What are the themes that emerge from interviews with NG staff about parental involvement in NG's? How can these be used in supporting the development of parental involvement?		3. Other factors affecting parental involvement. 4. Staff barriers to parental involvement. 5. Parental barriers to parental involvement.
Syrnyk (2004)	Qualitative	7 x Variant (Special Acclimatising Programme using a Nurture Group Approach)	Kinetic Family Drawing at two-time points (T1 & T2) Semi-structured interviews: N=55)	NG Children integrating into a specialist provision: N=55 (aged 6-9 years)	RQ's What are the perceptions of children's experience of a NG approach as part of integration.	Comparison and interpretation of drawings from T1 & T2 using principles of K-F-D. Thematic Analysis of Interviews	Children enjoyed play, food, differentiated work and new teaching approach. Adults 2x smaller in T2. All peers and teachers included in majority of drawings.
Griffiths, Stenner & Hicks (2014)	Qualitative	Classic	Focus Group	NG Children: N=8 (aged 7-11 years)	RQ's What do NG children think about NG?	Thematic Analysis	The following themes were identified: 1. Environment 2. Learning.

					What is the same and different in NG? How does NG make you feel?		3. Self-regulatory behaviours. 4. Relationships
Garner & Thomas (2011)	Qualitative	Secondary school Variant	Focus Group Semi-structured interviews	<u>Focus Group</u> NG staff: N=3 Mainstream Staff: 3 Parents: N=5 <u>Semi-structured Interviews</u> NG Children: N=6 (years 7-9)	RQ Can the original NG model be used with secondary age children?	Thematic Analysis	The following themes were identified: 1. Relationships. 2. Outcomes. 3. Secure base. 4. Communication
Iszatt & Wasilewska (1997)	Quantitative (Longitudinal)	Not stated	Pre and post through use of attendance records.	NG Children: 308	Attendance records	Descriptive statistics	-87% returned to their full time mainstream class less than a year after starting the intervention. -83% of these remained in this mainstream setting. -4% being moved to a specialist setting due an inability to meet need.
Doyle (2001)	Qualitative	Classic	Case Study Using a readiness	NG children: N= 2	Measure: Nurture Group Re-integration	Narrative	Individual children made good progress against the

			scale for re-integrating pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from a NG into their mainstream classroom.		Readiness scale.		measure through their re-integration. Benefits of a nurturing approach to the whole school community.
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UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

Victoria Gayter

E-mail: u1529177@uel.ac.uk

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate a research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational & Child Psychology at the University of East London.

Project Title

What makes re-integration from Nurture Groups to mainstream education successful or unsuccessful: the views of the Children, Parents and School Staff?

Project Description

The purpose of this research is to explore what nurseries and schools are doing to re-integrate children who have attended nursery Nurture Groups (NG) into mainstream reception classes.

The research would like to hear the perception of the children who have experienced nurture groups and are in mainstream reception classes, the parents of these children, nursery nurture group staff and school staff responsible for children who have attended a NG in their nursery year.

Children will be asked to take photographs of important places, objects and people in their school and these photographs will be developed by the researcher. Children will then take part in an interview with the researcher in which they will discuss the pictures they have taken.

Two separate groups, one with parents and one with staff will take place to discuss their experiences of children moving from nurture group provision in nursery to reception class at school. Focus groups will take one hour of your time, be recorded by a video camera and take place at a Primary school.

The proposed research aims to explore current practice in re-integration and what participant's views are about this practice. It is hoped that participants can build

relationships through the research that can be supportive and further lasting than the research period.

Confidentiality of the Data

Participants have the right to withdraw their participation up until the point of analysis. Analysis of data will start in July 2017 and therefore participants will have until this point to withdraw their consent.

The names and details of participants will be stored in a lockable cabinet with the Local Authority offices. All names will be omitted from the reporting of data and transcripts (written record of interviews) however due to the qualitative nature of the research it may not be possible to omit identifying references that are a result of reported personal experiences that are related to the research questions during analysis.

All names and contact details will be destroyed after completion of the research (July 2018), although transcripts will be kept on an encrypted file for a period of three years, pending publication.

Dictaphones and video cameras will be stored in a lockable cabinet in the local authority until they have been transcribed and then immediately wiped.

Location

Child interviews will take place within the school they attend.
Focus groups will take place at a Primary school taking part in the research.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel coerced. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. [Include if relevant to you: Should you withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use your anonymised data in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

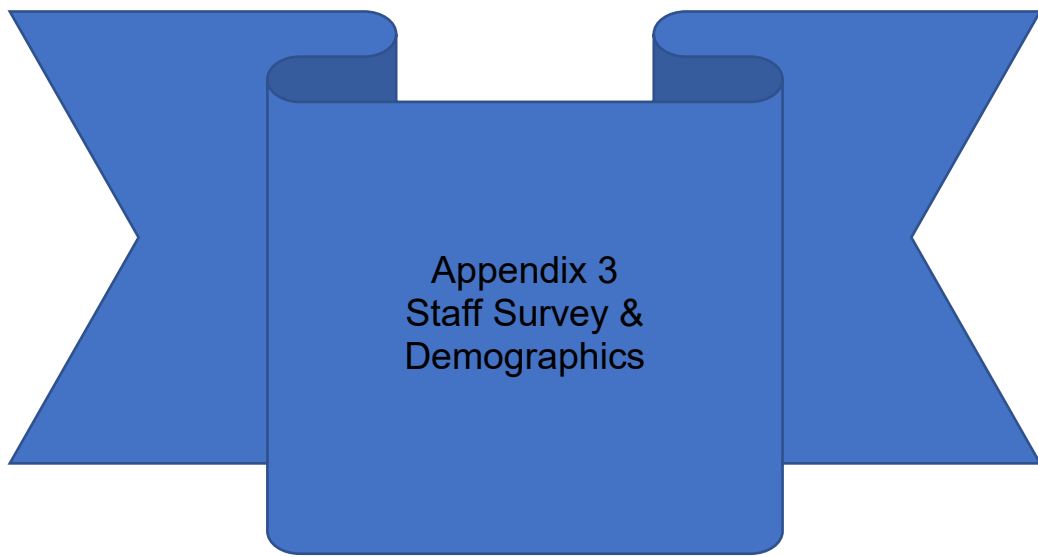
Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor; Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. E-mail: M.Robinson@uel.ac.uk

or

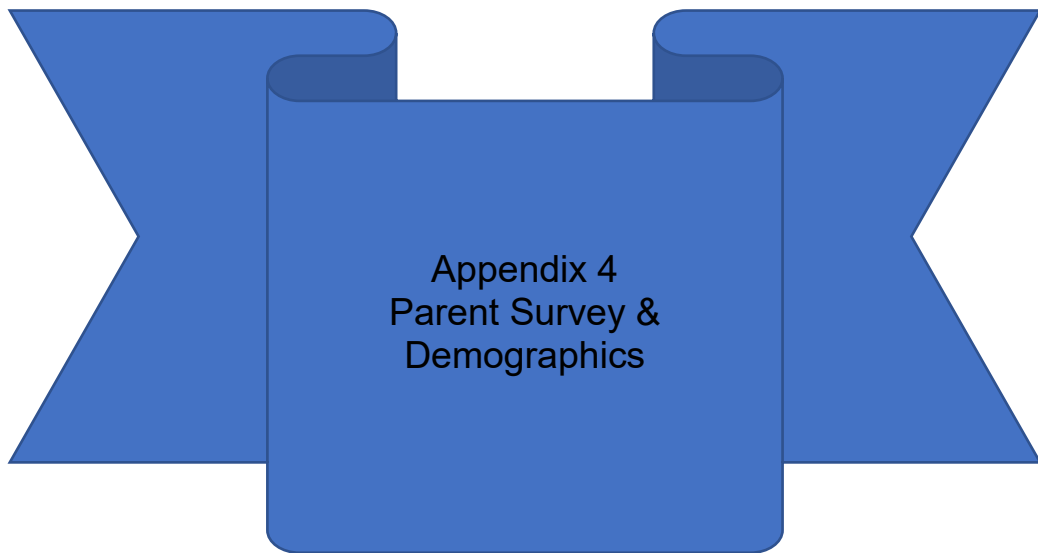
Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

(Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk)



Staff Demographic Information Form & Survey

1. Age Range	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
2. I am...	Male		Female	
3. I am a...	NG Teacher	Mainstream Teacher	SENCO	
4. Type of Nurture Group	Classic		Variant	
5. How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?				
6. How much guidance have you been given on running Nurture Groups? (Circle as appropriate)	<div style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High </div>			
7. Please rate your knowledge of running Nurture Groups?	<div style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High </div>			
8. How much guidance have you been given on reintegrating Nurture Group children into mainstream classrooms?	<div style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High </div>			
9. How much knowledge do you have on reintegrating children Nurture Group children into mainstream classrooms?	<div style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High </div>			
10. What level of participation do parents have in Nurture Groups?	<div style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High </div>			
11. What level of involvement do parents have in the reintegration of their children into mainstream classrooms?	<div style="text-align: center;"> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High </div>			
12. How do you measure long term effects of Nurture Group provision?				



Demographic Information Form

Age Range	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
I am...	Male		Female	
My relationship to the child..	Mother	Father	Other Please State	
1 How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?				
2 How would you describe your child's ethnic background?				
3 Please rate your knowledge of Nurture Groups?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High			
4. How much knowledge do you have on reintegrating children Nurture Group children into mainstream classrooms?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High			
5. What level of participation do parents have in Nurture Groups?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High			
6. What level of involvement do parents have in the reintegration of their children into mainstream classrooms?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 None.....Moderate.....High			
7. How would you rate your experience of re-integrating your child into mainstream school from the Nurture Group?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Negative.....Moderate.....Positive			

Parent Engagement Survey

1. How often do you meet in person with your child's Teacher?

Almost Never	Once or twice per year
Every few months	Weekly
Weekly or more	

2. In the past year how often have you visited your child's school (for any reason) apart from drop off and pick up?

Almost Never	Once or twice per year
Every few months	Weekly
Weekly or more	

3. To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially?

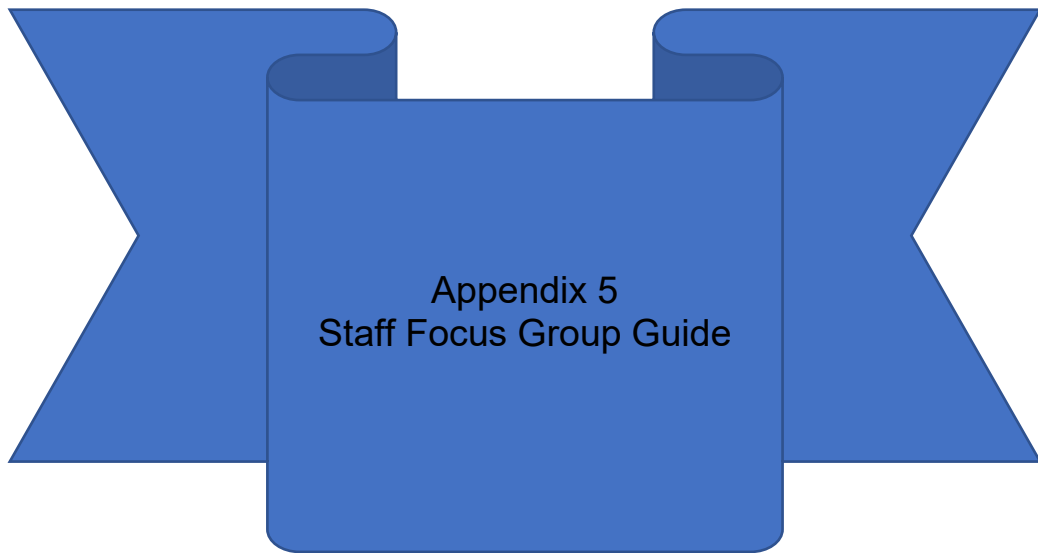
Not at all	A little bit
Quite a bit	A significant amount
A tremendous amount	

4. How confident were you in the school's ability to meet your child's needs in the summer before they joined?

Not at all	A little bit
Quite a bit	A significant amount
A tremendous amount	

5. How confident are you in the school's ability to meet your child's needs now?

Not at all	A little bit
Quite a bit	A significant amount
A tremendous amount	



Focus Group Guide

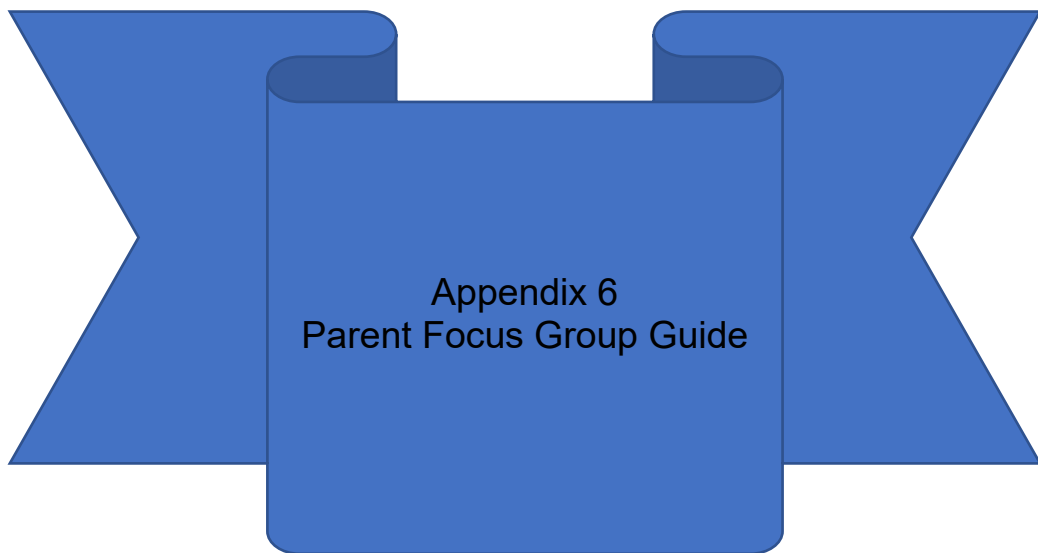
1. Seeking thoughts and opinions and nothing is right or wrong
2. Group Rules
3. Brief introduction and what did you eat for lunch?
4. Purpose of the focus group and link to previous research
 - Little written on how to re-integrate and how to measure success
 - Lots of data collected pre and post but not long term
 - Children become dependent on NG practices and are not fully prepared for mainstream classroom policies.
 - Lack of communication between NG staff and mainstream school staff.

Starting Questions

- What's the first thing that comes to your mind when I say NG?
- What's the main strength of a NG?

Main Questions

- What are the current re-integration practices in place? Brainstorm
 - What works well?
 - What doesn't?
-
- Are there differences between the NG children coming into reception compared to those who are not?
 - What do they find difficult?
 - What do they find helpful?
-
- Is the transition process the same for NG children?
-
- Within the nursery/reception do NG children stick together?
 - Why do they do/not do that?
-
- What levels of communication (*needs, levels, history*) are currently in place between staff and/parents?
-
- Does having an awareness of NG provision affect your teaching/way you do your job? Whole school effects?



Focus Group Guide

1. Seeking thoughts and opinions and nothing is right or wrong
2. Group Rules
3. Brief introduction and how was your journey?
4. Purpose of the focus group and link to previous research
 - Little written on how to re-integrate and how to measure success
 - Lots of data collected pre and post but not long term
 - Children become dependent on NG practices and are not fully prepared for mainstream classroom policies.
 - Lack of involvement from parents.

Starting Questions

- What's the first thing that comes to your mind when I say NG?
- What was the main strength of the NG?

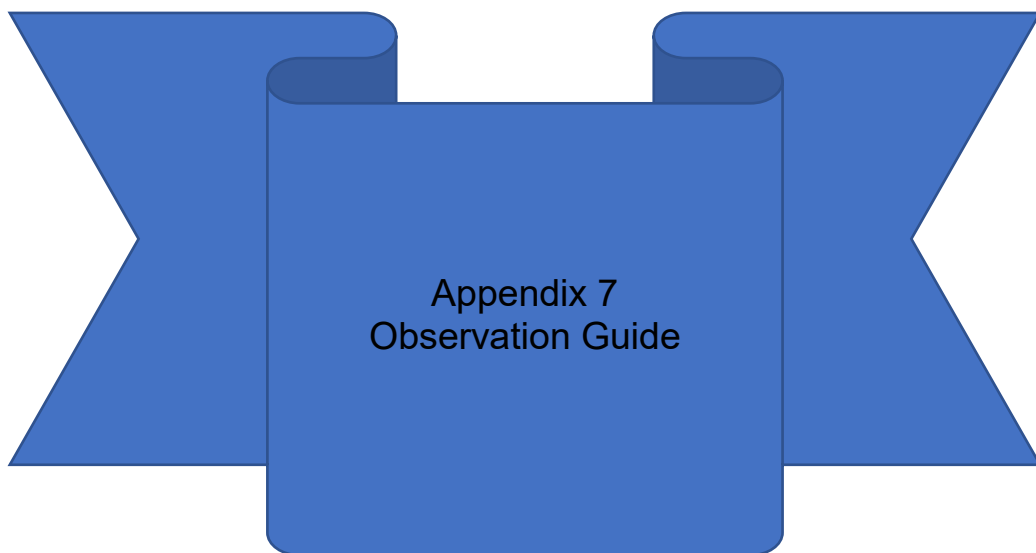
Main Questions

- What preparation took place to move children from NG to mainstream?
- What involvement did you have in that planning?
- What worked well?
- What didn't work well?

- What was your children's experience of the transition?

- Where there any changes in behaviour at home?

- What levels of communication (*needs, levels, history*) are currently in place between staff and/parents?



Interaction	Speech/Topic	Body language	Level of contribution



School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates

REVIEWER: Dr Ian Tucker

SUPERVISOR: Dr Mary Robinson

COURSE: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

STUDENT: Victoria Gayter

TITLE OF PROPOSED STUDY: What determines the success of re-integration from Nurture Groups to mainstream education: the views of the Children, Parents and School Staff?

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.
2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below): In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.
3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below): In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY
(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

2

Minor amendments required (*for reviewer*):

Copy of Participant Information Sheet for children. Ethics form states it will be “designed using pictures and minimal text for discussion with their parents”. Please gain approval from supervisor of pictures used. These are not included in the form as it stands (Appendix 6)

Major amendments required (for reviewer):

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEARCHER (for reviewer)

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐

HIGH

☐

MEDIUM

☒

LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any):

Reviewer Ian Tucker:

Date: 26/4/17

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments (for students):

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name (Typed name to act as signature): Victoria Gayter
Student number: u1529177

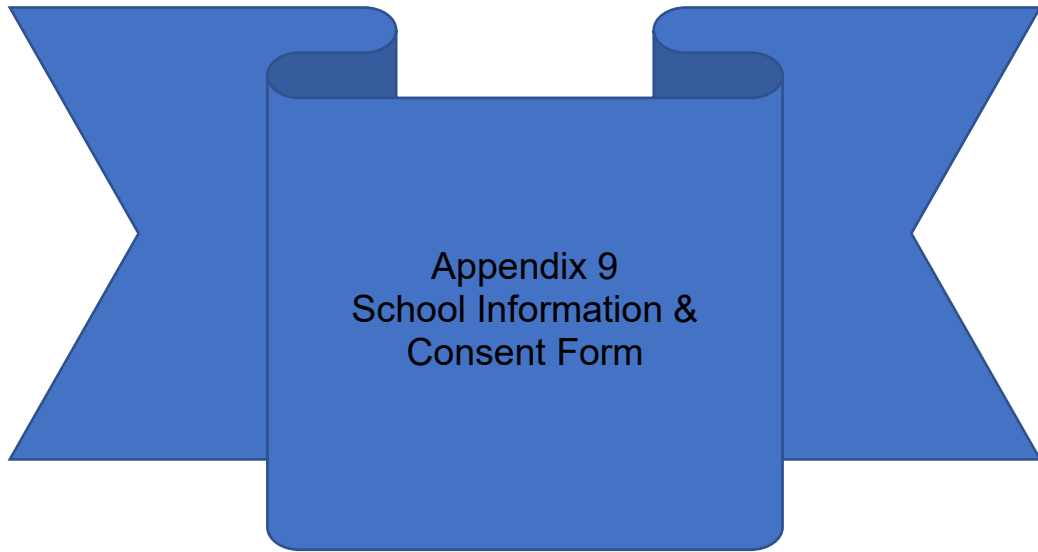
Date: 16/03/2018

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

PLEASE NOTE:

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

*For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's insurance and indemnity policy, travel approval from UEL (not the School of Psychology) must be gained if a researcher intends to travel overseas to collect data, even if this involves the researcher travelling to his/her home country to conduct the research. Application details can be found here: <http://www.uel.ac.uk/gradschool/ethics/fieldwork/>





UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

Victoria Gayter

E-mail: u1529177@uel.ac.uk

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding if your school would like to take part in this research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational & Child Psychology at the University of East London.

Project Title

What makes re-integration from Nurture Groups to mainstream education successful or unsuccessful: the views of the Children, Parents and School Staff?

Project Description

- The purpose of this research is to explore what nurseries and schools are doing to re-integrate children who have attended nursery Nurture Groups (NG) into mainstream reception classes.
- The research would like to hear the perception of the children who have experienced nurture groups and are in mainstream reception classes, the parents of these children, nursery nurture group staff and school staff responsible for children who have attended a NG in their nursery year.
- Children will be asked to take photographs of important places, objects and people in their school and these photographs will be developed by the researcher. Children will then take part in an interview with the researcher in which they will discuss the pictures they have taken.
- Two separate groups, one with parents and one with school staff will take place to discuss their experiences of children moving from nurture group provision in nursery to reception class at school. Focus groups will take one hour of your staff member's time and will be recorded by a video camera.

- The proposed research aims to explore current practice in re-integration and what participant's views are about this practice. It is hoped that participants can build relationships through the research that can be supportive and further lasting than the research period.

Location

Child interviews will take place within the school they attend.
Focus groups will take place at Mundell's.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel coerced. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. [Include if relevant to you: Should you withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use your anonymised data in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor; Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. E-mail: M.Robinson@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller,
School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Gayter

17/05/2017

Consent to participate in a research study

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I hereby grant permission for (School Name) to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this permission I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Head Teachers Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Head Teachers Signature

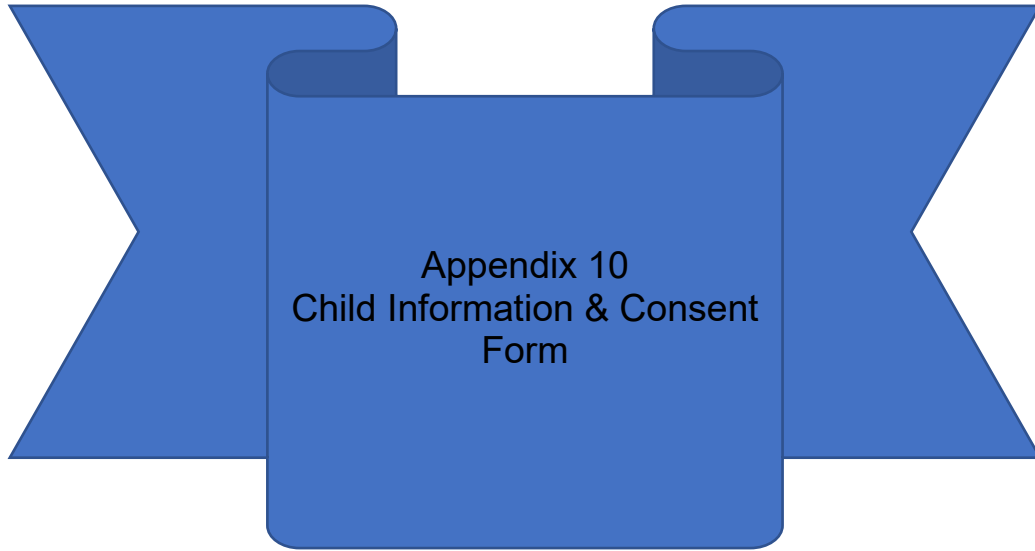
.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

Date:





Dear (Parent),

Could you please provide consent for your child to participate in a project which aims to identify what makes a successful transition from a nursery nurture group, into school reception class?

Your child will be asked to take photographs of important places, objects and people in their school. I will develop these pictures and sit with the children to discuss why the images are important to them. The children will also be allowed to keep any photo's they have taken.

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement at XXXXX until July 2018 and am supervised by a Senior Psychologist who oversees all my work. I feel this project is important as it recognises, documents and shares the work our nurture groups and schools are doing to support our children to flourish. **Please complete the consent form on the following page in order for your child to take part as soon as possible and return it to XXXXXX (I would like to complete this work before the end of term).**

There will also be an opportunity for parents to join a focus group in the future to discuss the successfulness of your child's transition with other parents. Please see additional information for more detailed information.

Kind

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

Trainee Educational Psychologist



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Consent to participate in a research study

What makes re-integration from Nurture Groups to mainstream education successful or unsuccessful: the views of the Children, Parents and School Staff?

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that mine and my child's involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent for my child to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

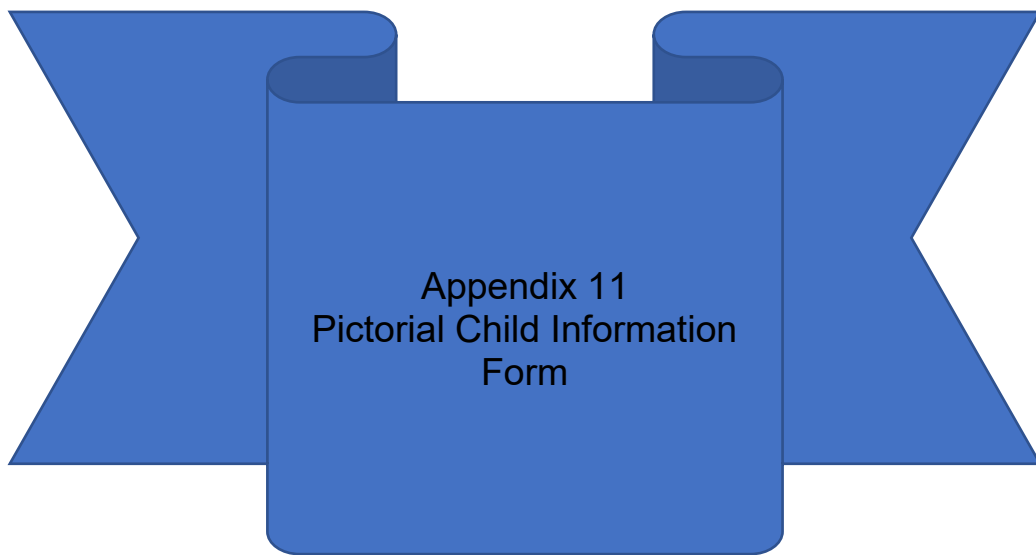
.....
Participant's Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....
Researcher's Signature

Date:



Appendix 11
Pictorial Child Information
Form

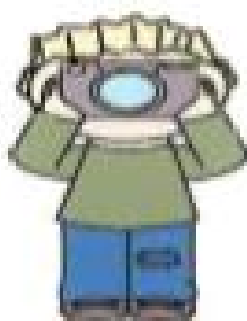
Hello! My name is Victoria



Today I would like you to take me around your school...



We are going to take some pictures...



Using a tablet....



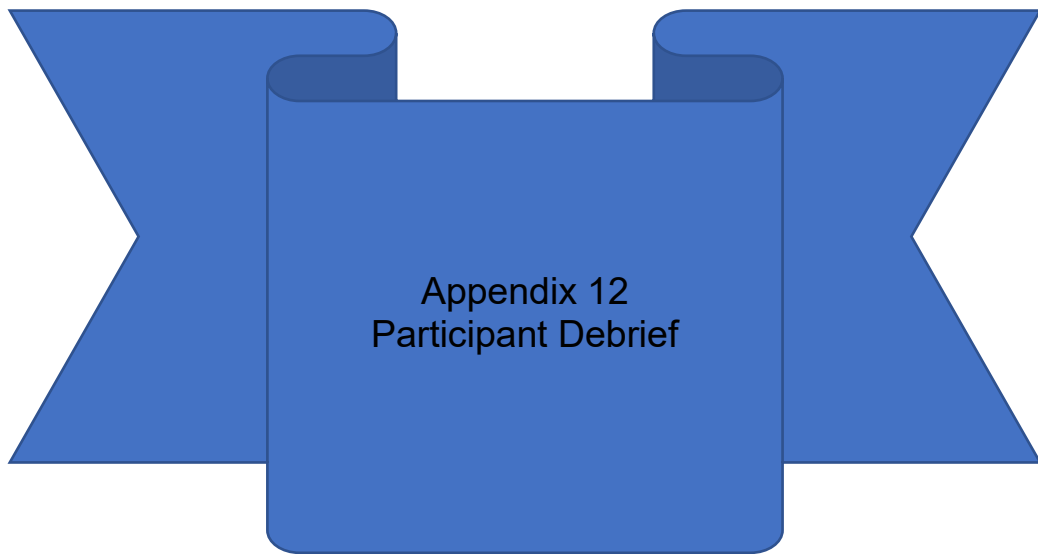
Of all the things, people and places that are important to you...



Later in the week we can look at your pictures and talk about them...

Do you want to do that?







UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

Victoria Gayter

E-mail: u1529177@uel.ac.uk

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Project Title

What makes re-integration from Nurture Groups to mainstream education successful or unsuccessful: the views of the Children, Parents and School Staff?

Debrief Sheet

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Please be reminded that if you have any questions you are free to contact me on the contact details above and are free to withdraw your participation up until 31st October 2017.

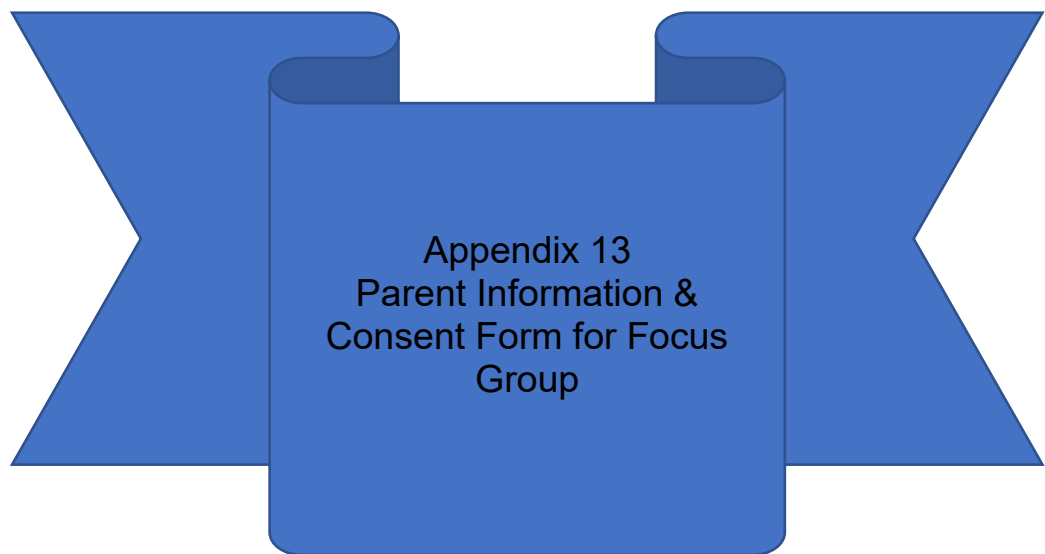
All recordings will be deleted once transcribed and all names and personal information (age, contact details) will be destroyed.

Confidentiality of the Data

The names and details of participants will be stored in a lockable cabinet with the Local Authority offices. All names will be omitted from the reporting of data and transcripts (written record of interviews) however due to the qualitative nature of the research it may not be possible to omit identifying references that are a result of reported personal experiences that are related to the research questions during analysis.

All names and contact details will be destroyed after completion of the research (July 2018), although transcripts will be kept on an encrypted file for a period of three years, pending publication.

Dictaphones and video cameras will be stored in a lockable cabinet in the local authority until they have been transcribed and then immediately wiped.





Dear (Parent),

PARENT FOCUS GROUP INVITATION!

I really hope you liked the pictures your child brought home after their morning with me, I had a lot of fun working with them and getting to know all their favourite places, people and objects at school.

Now it's over to you! You may remember from the initial Information Letter that I am running a 'Parent Focus Group' to discuss what children who have accessed Nurture Group provision in Nursery need for a successful transition in Primary school. Given your invaluable experience of this I would really appreciate your involvement.

I am inviting 4 lucky sets of parents to the focus group (Mum's & Dad's both welcome).

The focus group will take place on Wednesday 13th December @ 9:15am (straight after drop off).

I can meet you all at reception and will bring sweet breakfast treats.

Kind regards,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Victoria Gayter.

Victoria Gayter
Trainee Educational Psychologist



UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

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Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Participant's Signature

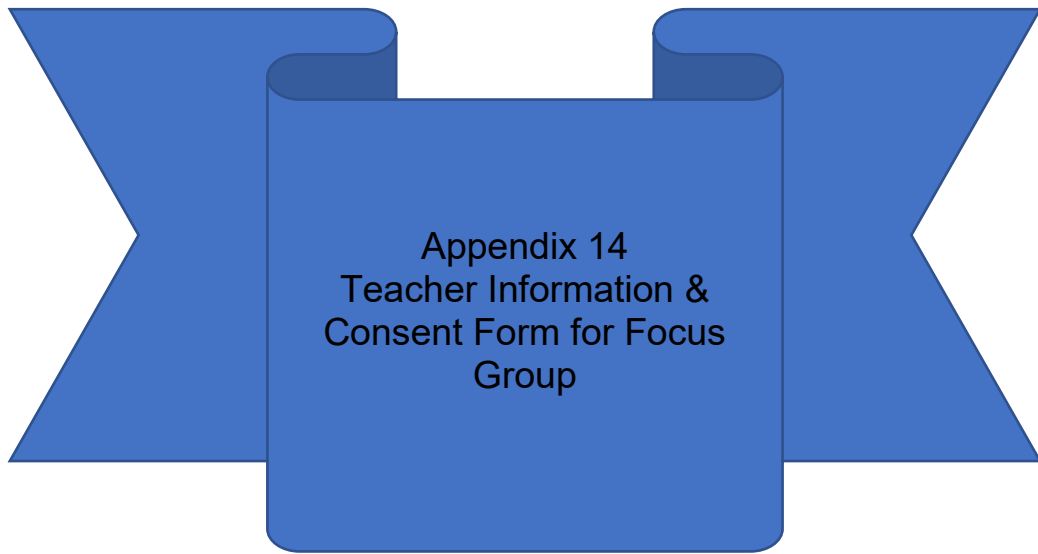
.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

Date:





UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

School of Psychology
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
London E15 4LZ

The Principal Investigator

Victoria Gayter

E-mail: u1529177@uel.ac.uk

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding if your school would like to take part in this research study. The study is being conducted as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational & Child Psychology at the University of East London.

Project Title

What makes re-integration from Nurture Groups to mainstream education successful or unsuccessful: the views of the Children, Parents and School Staff?

Project Description

- The purpose of this research is to explore what nurseries and schools are doing to re-integrate children who have attended nursery Nurture Groups (NG) into mainstream reception classes.
- The research would like to hear the perception of the children who have experienced nurture groups and are in mainstream reception classes, the parents of these children, nursery nurture group staff and school staff responsible for children who have attended a NG in their nursery year.
- Children will be asked to take photographs of important places, objects and people in their school and these photographs will be developed by the researcher. Children will then take part in an interview with the researcher in which they will discuss the pictures they have taken.
- Two separate groups, one with parents and one with school staff will take place to discuss their experiences of children moving from nurture group provision in nursery to reception class at school. Focus groups will take one hour of your staff member's time and will be recorded by a video camera.
- The proposed research aims to explore current practice in re-integration and what participant's views are about this practice. It is hoped that participants can build relationships through the research that can be supportive and further lasting than the research period.

Location

Child interviews will take place within the school they attend.
Focus groups will take place at Mundell's.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study and should not feel coerced. You are free to withdraw at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. [Include if relevant to you: Should you withdraw, the researcher reserves the right to use your anonymised data in the write-up of the study and any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

Please feel free to ask me any questions. If you are happy to continue you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to your participation. Please retain this invitation letter for reference.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the study has been conducted, please contact the study's supervisor; Mary Robinson, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ. E-mail: M.Robinson@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr. Mary Spiller,
School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Tel: 020 8223 4004. Email: m.j.spiller@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Gayter

17/05/2017

Consent to participate in a research study

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

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Teachers Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Teachers Signature

.....

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

.....

Researcher's Signature

Date: